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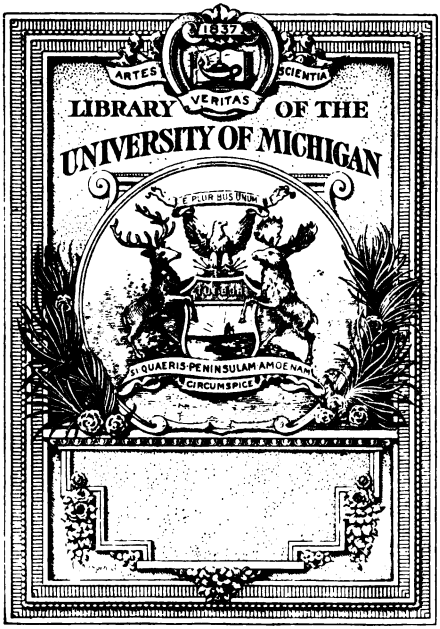

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THE LADY OF LOYALTY HOUSE

A Novel

BY

JUSTIN HUNTLY McCARTHY

AUTHOR OF

"MARJORIE" "THE PROUD PRINCE" ETC.

HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS

NEW YORK AND LONDON

1904

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Published October, 1904.

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AD SILVIAM

Take for our lady's loyal sake
  This vagrant tale of mine,
Where Cavalier and Roundhead break
  A reed for Right Divine,
A tale it pleasured me to make,
  And most to make it thine.

The Solemn Muse that watches o'er
  The actions of the great,
And bids this Venturer to soar,
  And that to stand and wait,
Will swear she never heard before
  The deeds that I relate.

But all is true for me and you,
  Though History denies;
I know thy Royal Standard flew
  Against autumnal skies,
And find thy rarest, bravest blue
  In Brilliana's eyes.

J. H. McC.

August 10, 1904.

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THE
LADY OF LOYALTY HOUSE

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THE LADY OF LOYALTY HOUSE

PROLOGUE

In the October of 1642 there came to Cambridge a man from over-seas. He was travelling backward, after the interval of a generation, through the stages of his youth. From his landing at the port whence he had sailed so many years before in chase of fortune he came to London, where he had bustled and thundered as a stage-player. Here he found a new drama playing in a theatre that took a capital city for its cockpit. He observed, sinister and diverted, for a while, and, being an adaptable man, shifted his southern-colored garments, over-blue, over-red, over-yellow in their seafaring way, for the sombre gray surcharged with solemn black. A translated man, if not a changed man, he journeyed to the university town of his stormy student hours, and there the black in his habit

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deepened at the expense of the gray. In the quadrangle of Sidney Sussex College he meditated much on the changes that had come about since the days when Sidney Sussex had expelled him, very peremptorily, from her gates. The college herself had altered greatly since his day. The fair court that Ralph Symons had constructed had now its complement in the fair new court of Francis Clerke. The enlargement of his mother-college was not so marvellous to him, however, as the enlargement of one among her sons. A fellow-commoner of his time had, like himself, come again to Cambridge, arriving thither by a different road. This fellow-commoner was now the member in Parliament for Cambridge, had buckled a soldier's baldric over a farmer's coat, had carried things with a high hand in the ancient collegiate city, had made himself greatly liked by these, greatly disliked by those.

Musing philosophically, but also observing shrewdly and inquiring as pertinaciously as dexterously, our traveller made himself familiar with places of public resort, sat in taverns where he tasted ale more soberly than was his use or his pleasure, listened, patently devout, to godly exhortations, and implicated himself by an interested silence in strenuous political opinions.

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From all this he learned much that amazed, much that amused him, but what interested him most of all had to do with the third stage of his retrospective pilgrimage. If he had not been bound for Harby eventually, what came to his ears by chance would have spurred him thither, ever keen as he was to behold the vivid, the theatrical in life. Women had always delighted him, if they had often damned him, and there was a woman's name on rumor's many tongues when rumor talked of Harby. So it came to be that he rode sooner than he had proposed, and far harder than he had proposed, through green, level Cambridgeshire, through green, hilly Oxfordshire, with Harby for his goal. Chameleon-like, he changed hues on the way, shifting, with the help of his wallet, back into a gaudier garb less likely to be frowned on in regions kindly to the King.

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I

THE STRANGER AT THE GATES

THE village of Harby was vastly proud of its inn, and by consequence the innkeeper thought highly of the village of Harby. He had been a happy innkeeper for the better part of a reasonably long life, and he had hoped to be a happy innkeeper to that life's desirably distant close. But the world is not made for innkeepers by innkeepers, and Master Vallance was newly come into woes. For it had pleased certain persons of importance lately to come to loggerheads without any consideration for the welfare of Master Vallance, and in trying to peer through the dust of their broils on the possible future for England and himself, he could prognosticate little good for either. Master Vallance was a patriot after his fashion; he wished his country well, but he wished himself better, and the brawling of certain persons of importance might, apart from its direct influence upon the fortunes of the kingdom, indirectly result in Master Vallance's downfall. For the persons of im-

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portance whose bickerings so grievously interested Master Vallance were on the one side his most sacred and gracious Majesty King Charles I., and on the other a number of units as to whose powers or purposes Master Vallance entertained only the most shadowy notions, but who were disagreeably familiar to him in a term of mystery as the Parliament.

In the mellow October evening Master Vallance sat at his inn door and dandled troubled thoughts. The year of his lord 1642 having begun badly, threatened to end worse. Master Vallance chewed the cud of country-side gossip. He reminded himself that not so very far away the King had set up his standard at Nottingham and summoned all loyal souls to his banner; that not so very far away in Cambridge, a fussy gentleman, a Mr. Cromwell, member for that place, had officiously pushed the interests of the Parliament by raising troops of volunteers and laying violent hands upon the University plate. Master Vallance tickled his chin and tried to count miles and to weigh probabilities. Royalty was near, but Parliament seemed nearer; which would be the first of the fighting forces to spread a strong hand over Harby?

Master Vallance emptied his mug and, turning his head, looked up the village street, and

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over the village street to the rising ground beyond and the gray house that crowned it. He sighed as he surveyed the familiar walls of Harby House, because of one unfamiliar object. Over the ancient walls, straight from the ancient roof, sprang a flag-staff, and from that flag-staff floated a banner which Master Vallance knew well enough to be the royal standard of England's King. Master Vallance also knew, for he had been told this by Master Marfleet, the school-master, that the Lady of Harby had no right to fly the standard, seeing that the presence of that standard implied the bodily presence of the King. But he also knew, still on Master Marfleet's authority, that the Lady of Harby had flung that standard to the winds in no ignorance nor defiance of courtly custom. He knew that the high-spirited, beautiful girl had been the first in all the country-side to declare for the King, prompt where others were slow, loyal where others faltered, and that she flew the King's flag from her own battlements in subtle assertion of her belief that in every faithful house the King was figuratively, or, as it were, spiritually, a guest.

Master Vallance, reflecting drearily upon the uncertainties of an existence in which high-spirited, beautiful young ladies played an im-

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portant part, became all of a sudden, though unaccountably, aware that he was not alone. Moving his muddled head slowly away from the walls of Harby, he allowed it to describe the better part of a semicircle before it paused, and he gazed upon the face of a stranger. The stranger was eying the innkeeper with a kind of good-natured ferociousness or ferocious good-nature, which little in the stranger's appearance or demeanor tended to make more palatable to the timid eyes of Master Vallance.

"Outlandish," was the epithet which lumbered into Master Vallance's mind as he gaped, and the epithet fitted the new-comer aptly. He was, indeed, an Englishman; that was plain enough to the instinct of another Englishman, if only for the gray-blue English eyes; and yet there was little that was English in the sun-scorched darkness of his face, little that was English in the almost fantastic effrontery of his carriage, the more than fantastic effrontery of his habit.

When the stranger perceived that he had riveted Master Vallance's attention, he smiled a derisive smile, which allowed the innkeeper to observe a mouthful of teeth irregular but white. Then he extended a lean, brown hand whose fingers glittered with many rings, and caught

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Master Vallance by his fat shoulder, into whose flesh the grip seemed to sink like the resistless talons of a bird of prey. Slowly he swayed Master Vallance backward and forward, while over the dark face rippled a succession of leers, grins, and grimaces, which had the effect of making Master Vallance feel thoroughly uncomfortable. Nor did the stranger's speech, when speech came, carry much of reassurance.

"Bestir thee, drowsy serving-slave of Bacchus," the stranger chanted, in a pompous, high-pitched voice. "Emerge from the lubberland of dreams, and be swift in attendance upon a wight whose wandering star has led him to your hospitable gate."

As the stranger uttered these last words his hand had drawn the bemused innkeeper towards him: with their utterance he suddenly released his grip, thereby causing Master Vallance to lurch heavily backward and bump his shoulders sorely against the inn wall. The stranger thrust his face close to Master Vallance's, and while a succession of grimaces rippled over its sunburned surface he continued, in a tone of mock pathos:

"Do you shut your door against the houseless and the homeless, O iron-hearted innkeeper?

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Can the wandering orphan find no portion in your heart?"

Then, as Master Vallance was slowly making sure that he had to deal with a dangerous lunatic, the stranger drew himself up and swayed to and fro in a fit of inextinguishable laughter.

"Lordamercy upon me," he said, when he had done laughing, in a perfectly natural voice. "I have seen some frightened fools before, but never a fool so frightened. Tell me, honest blockhead, did you ever hear such a name as Halfman?"

Master Vallance, torpidly reassured, meditated. "Halfman," he murmured. "Halfman. Ay, there was one in this village, long ago, had such a name. He had a roguish son, and they say the son came to a bad end."

The new-comer nodded his head gravely.

"He had a roguish son," he said; "but I am loath to admit that he came to a bad end, unless it be so to end at ease in Harby. For I am that same Hercules Halfman, at your service, my ancient ape, come back to Harby after nigh thirty years of sea-travel and land-travel, with no other purpose in my mind than to sit at my ease by mine own hearth in winter and to loll in my garden in summer. What do you say to that, O father of all fools?"

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Master Vallance, having nothing particular to say, said, for the moment, nothing. He was dimly appreciating, however, that this vociferous intruder upon his quiet had all the appearance of one who was well to do and all the manner of one accustomed to have his own way in the world. It seemed to him, therefore, that the happiest suggestion he could make to the home-comer was to quench his thirst, and, further, to do so with the aid of a flask of wine.

The stranger agreed to the first clause of the proposition and vetoed the second.

"Ale," he said, emphatically. "Honest English ale. I am of a very English temper today; I would play the part of a true-hearted Englishman to the life, and, therefore, my tipple is true-hearted English ale."

Master Vallance motioned to his guest to enter the house, but Halfman denied him.

"Out in the open," he carolled. "Out in the open, friend." He rattled off some lines of blank verse in praise of the liberal air that set Master Vallance staring before he resumed plain speech. "When a man has lived in such hissing hot places that he is fain to spend his life under cover, he is glad to keep abroad in this green English sweetness."

He had seated himself comfortably on the

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settle by now, and he stretched out his arms as if to embrace the prospect. Master Vallance dived into the inn, and when he emerged a few seconds later, bearing two large pewter measures, the traveller was still surveying the landscape with the same air of ecstasy. Master Vallance handed him a full tankard, which Halfman drained at a draught and rattled on the table with a sigh of satisfaction.

"Right English ale," he attested. "Divine English ale. What gold would I not have given, what blood would I not have spilled for such a draught as that, so clean, so cool, so noble, in the lands where I have lived. The Dry Tortugas—the Dry Tortugas, and never a drop of English ale to cool an English palate."

He seemed so affected by the reflection that he let his hand close, as if unconsciously, upon Master Vallance's tankard, which Master Vallance had set upon the table untasted, and before the innkeeper could interfere its contents had disappeared down Halfman's throat and a second empty vessel rattled upon the board.

The eloquence of disappointment on Master Vallance's face as he beheld this dexterity moved the thirst-slaked Halfman to new mirth. But while he laughed he thrust his hand in his

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breeches-pocket and pulled out a palm full of gold pieces.

"Never fear, Master Landlord," he shouted; "you shall drink of your best at my expense, I promise you. We will hob-a-nob together, I tell you. Keep me your best bedroom, lavender-scented linen and all. I will take my ease here till I set up my Spanish castle on English earth, and in the mean time I swear I will never quarrel with your reckoning. I have lived so long upon others that it is only fair another should live upon me for a change. So fill mugs again, Master Landlord, and let us have a chat."

Master Vallance did fill the mugs again, more than once, and he and the stranger did have a chat; at least, they talked together for the better part of an hour. In all that time Master Vallance, fumbling foolishly with flagrant questions, learned little of his companion save what that companion was willing, or maybe determined, that he should learn. Master Halfman made no concealment of it that he had been wild at Cambridge, and he hinted, indeed, broadly enough, that he had had a companion in his wildness who had since grown to be a godly man that carried the name of Cromwell. He admitted frankly that his pranks cast him forth

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from Cambridge, and that he had been a stage-player for a time in London, in proof whereof he declaimed to the amazed Master Vallance many flowing periods from Beaumont, Fletcher, Massinger, and their kind — mental fireworks that bedazzled the innkeeper. Of his voyages, indeed, he spoke more vaguely if not more sparingly, conjuring up gorgeous visions to the landlord of pampas and palm-lands, where gold and beauty forever answered to the ready hand. But Master Halfman, for his part volubly indistinct and without seeming to interrogate at all, was soon in possession of every item of information concerning the country-side that was of the least likelihood to serve him. He learned, for instance, what he had indeed guessed, that the simple country-folk knew little and cared little for the quarrel that was brewing over their heads, and had little idea of what the consequences might be to them and theirs. He learned that the local gentry were, for the most part, lukewarm politicians; that Peter Rainham and Paul Hungerford were keeping themselves very much to themselves, and being a brace of skinflints were fearing chiefly for their money-bags; while Sir Blaise Mickleton, who had been credited with the intention of riding to join his Majesty at Shrewsbury, had

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suddenly taken to his bed sick of a strange distemper which declared itself in no outward form, but absolutely forbade its victim to take violent action of any kind. He learned that there were exceptions to this tepidity. Sir Randolph Harby, of Harby Lesser, beyond the hill, Sir Rufus Quaryll, of Quaryll Tower, had mounted horse and whistled to men at the first whisper of the business and ridden like devils to rally on the King's flag. He learned much that was familiar and important to him of the Harby family history; he learned much that was unfamiliar and unimportant to him of local matters, such as that Master Marfleet, the village schoolmaster, was inclined to say all that might be said in praise of the Parliament men, and that, when all was said and done, the only avowed out-and-out loyalist in the neighborhood was no man at all, but a beautiful, high-spirited girl-woman, the Lady Brilliana Harby.

The Lady Brilliana Harby. When Halfman was a lad gray Roland was Earl of Harby, a choleric scholar, seeming celibate in grain, though the title ran in direct male line. Suddenly, as Halfman now learned, gray Roland married a maid some forty years younger than he, and she gave him a child and died in the giving. This did not perpetuate the title, for the

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child was a girl, but it gave the gray lord something to cherish for the sake of his lost love. This child was now the Lady Brilliana, whom gray Roland had adored and spoiled to the day of his own death, hastened by a fit of rage at the news of the King's failure to capture the five members. Since then the Lady Brilliana had reigned alone at Harby, indifferent to suitors, and had flown the King's flag at the first point of war. "By Heaven!" said Halfman, "I will have a look at the Lady Brilliana."

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II

HARBY

As he tramped the muddy hill-road his mind was busy. The scent from the wet weeds on either side of him, heavy with the yester rains, brought back his boyhood insistently, and his memory leaped between then and now like a shuttlecock. He had dreamed dreams then; he was dreaming dreams now, though he had thought he was done with dreams. A few short months ago he had planned out his last part, the prosperous village citizen, the authority of the gossips, respectable and respected. His fancy had dwelt so fondly upon the house where he proposed to dwell that he seemed to know every crimson eave of it, every flower in the trim garden, the settle by the porch where he should sit and smoke his pipe and drain his can and listen to the booming of the bees, while he complacently savored the after-taste of discreditable adventures. He knew it so well in his mind that he had half come to believe that it really existed, that he had always owned it, that

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it truly awaited his home-coming, and his feeling as he entered the village that morning had been that he could walk straight to it, instead of abiding at the inn and going hither and thither day after day until he found in the market a homestead nearest to his picture. And now he was walking away from it, walking fairly fast, too, and walking whither? What business was it of his, after all, if some sad-faced fellows from Cambridge tramped across country to lay puritan hands upon Harby. What business was it of his if monarch browbeat Parliament or Parliament defied king? He owed nothing to either, cared nothing for either; what he owned he owed to his sharp sword, his dull conscience, his rogue's luck, and his player's heart. Why, then, was he going to Harby when he ought to be busy in the village looking for that house with crimson eaves and the bee-haunted garden?

He knew well enough, though he did not parcel out his knowledge into formal answers. In the first place, if the country was bent upon these civil broils, clearly his intended character of pipe-smoking, ale-drinking citizen was wholly unsuited to the coming play. Wherefore, in a jiff he had abandoned it, and now stood, mentally, as naked as a plucked fowl while he considered what costume he should wear and what

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character he should choose to interpret. His sense of humor tempted him to the sanctimonious suit of your out-and-out Parliament man; his love for finery and the high horse lured him to lovelocks and feathers. The old piratical instinct which he thought he had put to bed forever was awake in him, too, and asking which side could be made to pay the best for his services. If he must take sides, which side would fill his pockets the fuller? It was in the thick of these thoughts that he found himself within a few feet of the walls of the park of Harby.

The great gates were closed that his boyhood found always open. He smiled a little, and his smile increased as a figure stepped from behind the nearest tree within the walls, a sturdy, fresh-looking serving-fellow armed with a musketoon.

"Hail, friend," sang out Halfman, and "Stand, stranger," answered the man with the musketoon. Halfman eyed him good-humoredly.

"You do not carry your weapon well," he commented. "Were I hostile and armed you would be a dead jack before you could bring butt to shoulder. Yet you are a soldierly fellow and wear a fighting face."

The man with the musketoon met the censure

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and the commendation with the same frown as he surlily demanded the stranger's business at the gates of Harby.

"My business," answered Halfman, blithely, "is with the Lady of Harby," and before the other could shape the refusal of his eyes into an articulate grumble he went on, briskly, "Tell the Lady Brilliana Harby that an old soldier who is a Harby man born has some words to say to her which she may be willing to hear."

"Are you a King's man," the other questioned, still holding his weapon in awkward watchfulness of the stranger. Halfman laughed pleasantly.

"Who but a King's man could hope to have civil speech with the Lady Brilliana Harby?"

He plucked off his hat as he spoke and waved it in the air with a flourish. "God save the King!" he shouted, loyally, and for the moment his heart was as loyal as his voice, untroubled by any thought of a venal sword and a highest bidder. Just there in the sunlight, facing the red walls of Harby and the flapping standard of the sovereign, on the eve of an interview with a bold, devoted lady, it seemed so fitly his cue to cry "God save the King!" that he did so with all the volume of his lungs.

The man with the musketoon seemed molli-

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fied by the new-comer's specious show of allegiance.

"We shall see," he muttered. "We shall see. Stay where you are, just where you are, and I will inquire at the hall. The gate is fast, so you can do no mischief while my back is turned."

As he spoke he turned on his heel and, plunging among the trees in pursuit of a shorter cut than the winding avenue, disappeared from view. Halfman eyed the gateway with a smile.

"I do not think those bars would keep me out long if I had a mind to climb them," he said to himself, complacently. But he was content to wait, walking up and down on the wet grass and running over in his mind the playhouse verses most suited to a soldier of fortune at the gate of a great lady. He had not to wait long. Before the jumble-cupboard of his memory had furnished him with the most felicitous quotation his ears heard a heavy tread through the trees, and the man with the musket hailed him, tramping to the gate. He carried a great iron key in his free hand, and this he fitted to the lock of the gate, which, unused to its inhospitable condition, creaked and groaned as he tugged at it. As at length it yielded the man of Harby opened one-half wide enough to ad-

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mit the passage of a human body, and signalled to Halfman to come through. Halfman, smilingly observant, obeyed the invitation, and looked about him reflective while the gate was again put to and the key again turned in the lock to the same protesting discord. Many years had fallen from the tree of his life since he last trod the turf of Harby. All kinds of queer thoughts came about him, some melancholy, some full of mockery, some malign. He was no longer a poor lad with the world before him to whom the Lord of Harby was little less than the viceregent of God; he was a free man, he was a rich man, he had multiplied existences, had drunk of the wine of life from many casks and yet maintained through all a kind of cleanness of palate, ready for any vintage yet unbroached, be it white or red. The rough voice of his companion stirred him from his reverie.

"My lady will see you," he said. "Follow me."

As the man spoke he started off at a brisk pace upon the avenue with the evident intention of making his words the guide-marks to the newcomer's deeds. But Halfman, never a one to follow tamely, with an easy stretch of his long limbs, swung himself lightly beside his uncivil companion, and without breathing himself in

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the least kept steadily a foot-space ahead of him. "I was ever counted a good walker," he observed, cheerfully. "I have taken the world's ways at the trot; you will never outpace me."

The man of Harby slackened his speed for a second, and there came an ugly look of quarrel into his face which made it plain as a map for Halfman that there was immediate chance of a brawl and a tussle. He would have relished it well enough, knowing pretty shrewdly how it would end, but he contented himself for the moment, having other business in hand, with cheerful comment.

"Friend," he said, "if we are both King's men we have no leisure for quarrel, however much our fingers may itch. What is your name, valiant?"

The serving-man scowled at him for a moment; then his frown faded as he faced the smile and the bright, wild eyes of Halfman.

"My name is Thoroughgood," he answered, and he added, civilly enough, as if conscious of some air of gentility in his companion, "John Thoroughgood, at your service."

"A right good name for a right good fellow, if I know anything of men," Halfman approved. "And I take it that you serve a right good lady."

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"My lady is my lady," Thoroughgood replied, simply. "None like her as ever I heard tell of."

Halfman endeavored by dexterous questionings to get some further information than this of the Lady of Harby from her sturdy servant, but Thoroughgood's blunt brevity baffled him, and he soon reconciled himself to tramp in silence by his guide. So long as he remembered anything he remembered that passage through the park, the sweet smell of the wet grass, the waning splendors, russet and umber, of October leaves, the milky blueness of the autumn sky. This was, indeed, England, the long, half-forgotten, yet ever faintly remembered, in places of gold and bloodshed and furious suns, the place of peace of which the fortune-seeker sometimes dreamed and to which the fortune-maker chose to turn. The place of peace, where every man was arming, where citizens were handling steel with unfamiliar fingers, and where a rover like himself could not hope to let his sword lie idle. It was as he thought these thoughts that a turn of the road brought him face to face with Harby Hall, and all the episodes of a busy, bloody life seemed to dwindle into insignificance as he crossed the moat and passed with John Thoroughgood through the guarded por-

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tals and found himself once again in the shelter of the great hall.

The great hall at Harby was justly celebrated in Oxfordshire and in the neighboring counties as one of the loveliest examples of the rich domestic architecture which adorned the age of Elizabeth. "That prodigal bravery in building," which Camden commends, made no fairer display than at Harby which had been designed by the great architect Thorp. Of a Florentine favor externally, it was internally a magnificent illustration of what Elizabethan decorators could do, and the great hall gave the note to which the whole scheme was keyed. Its wonderful mullioned windows looked out across the moat on the terrace, and beyond the terrace on the park. Its walls of panelled oak were splendid witnesses to the skill of great craftsmen. Its carved roof was a marvel of art that had learned much in Italy and had made it English with the hand of genius. Over the great fireplace two armored figures guarded rigidly the glowing shield of the founder of the house. Heroes of the house, heroines of the house, stared or smiled from their canvases on the mortal shadows that flitted through the great place till it should be their turn to swell the company of the elect in frames of gold. At one end of the

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hall sprang the fair staircase that was itself one of the greatest glories of Harby, with its wonderful balustrade, on which, landing by landing, stood the glorious carved figures of the famous angels of Harby.

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III

MY LORD THE LADY

BETWEEN the topmost pair of carven angels a woman stood for a second looking down upon the man below. She had come quite suddenly from a door in the great gallery, and she paused for a moment on the topmost stair to survey the stranger who had summoned her. The stranger for his part stared up at the woman in an honest and immediate rapture. He was not unused to comely women, seen afar or seen at close quarters, but he felt very sure now that he had never seen a fair woman before. He prided himself on a most unreverential spirit, but his instant, most unfamiliar emotion was one of reverence. His fantastic wit idealized wildly enough. "An angel among angels," he exulted. "Ecce Rosa Mundi," his rusty scholarship trumpeted. His brain was a tumult of passionate phrases from passionate play-books, "Oh, thou art fairer than the evening air," overriding them all like a fairy swan upon a fairy sea. There never was such a woman since the

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world began; there never could be such a woman again till the world should end. And while his mind whirled with his own ecstasies and the ecstasies of dead players, the Lady Brilliana came slowly down the great stairs.

If the light of her on his eyes dazzled him, if the riot in his mind overprized her excellence, a saner man could scarce have failed to be delighted with the girl's beauty, a wiser to have denied her visible promises of merit. If better-balanced minds than the mind of Hercules Halfman, striving to conjure up the image of their dreams, had looked upon the face, upon the form, of Brilliana Harby, they might well have been willing to let imagination rest and be contented with the living flesh. Twenty sweet years of healthy country life had set their seal of grace and color upon the child of the union of two noble, sturdy stocks; all that was best of a brave dead man and a fair dead woman was mirrored in the pride of her face, the candor of her eyes, the courage of her mouth. Lost father and lost mother had made a strange pair; all their excellences were summed and multiplied in their bright child's being. A dozen gallant gentlemen of Oxford or Warwickshire would have given their fortunes for the smallest scissors-clipping of one sable curl, would have perilled

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their lives for one kind smile of those blue eyes, would have bartered their scanty chances of salvation for the first kiss of her fresh lips.

While she descended the stairs Halfman never took his eyes off the lady. He found himself wishing he were a painter, that he might perpetuate her graces through a few favored generations who might behold and adore her dimly as he beheld and adored her clearly, in her riding-dress of Lincoln green, whose voluminous superfluity she held gathered to her girdle as she moved. No painter could have scanned her more closely, noted more minutely the buckle of brilliants that captured the plume in her hat, the lace about her throat, the curious work upon her leather gauntlets, the firm foot in the small, square shoe, the riding-whip with its pommel of gold which she carried so commandingly. Lovely shadows trooped into his mind, names that had been naught but names to him till now—Rosalind, Camiola, Bianca. They had passed before him as so many smooth-faced youths, carrying awkwardly and awry their woman's wear, and lamentably uninspiring. Now he saw all these divine ladies take life incarnate in this divine lady, and he marvelled which of the loveliest of the rarely named com-

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pany could have shone on her poet's eyes so dazzlingly as this creature.

He stared in silence till she had reached the foot of the staircase, still stared silent as she advanced towards him. There was nothing disrespectful in his direct glance, but the steadfastness and the silence stirred her challenge.

"Sir," she said, "when you asked to see me it was not, I hope, in the thought to stare me out of countenance."

Halfman made her a sweeping salutation and found his voice with an effort, but his words did not interpret the admiration of his eyes.

"I asked to see you," he answered, respectfully, "because I ride with tidings that may touch you. I am newly from Cambridge."

Brilliana's eyes widened.

"What do you carry from Cambridge?" she asked; then swiftly added, "But first, I pray you, be seated."

She pointed to a chair on one side of the great table, and to set him the example seated herself at another. Halfman bowed and took his appointed place, resting his hat upon his knees.

"Lady," he said, "there was at Cambridge a certain Parliament man who plays at being a soldier, and though he should be no more than

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plain master, those that would do him pleasure call him Captain or Colonel Cromwell."

Brilliana frowned a little. "I have heard of the man," she said. "He talks treason at Westminster; he is the King's enemy."

Halfman leaned a little nearer to her across the table and spoke with a well-managed air of mystery.

"Captain Cromwell is not only the King's enemy; he is also the enemy of the Lady Brilliana Harby."

Brilliana shook her dark head proudly, and Halfman thought that her curls glanced like the arrows of Apollo.

"Any enemy of the King is an enemy to me, but not he, as I think, more than another."

Halfman tapped the table impressively.

"There you are mistaken, lady," he said. "The man is very especially and particularly your enemy. He has been very busy of late in Cambridge raising train-bands, capturing college plate, and the like naughtinesses, but he has not been so busy as not to hear how the King's flag flies unchallenged from the walls of Harby."

"And shall fly there so long as I live," Brilliana interrupted, hotly.

Halfman smiled approval of her heat, yet shook his head dubiously.

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"It shall not fly long unchallenged," he continued. "That is my news. Master Cromwell—may the devil fly away with his soldier's title—is sending hither a company of sour-faced Puritans to bid you haul down your flag."

Even as he spoke his heart glowed at the instant effect of his words upon the woman. She sprang to her feet, with flaming cheeks and blazing eyes, and struck her white hand upon the table.

"That flag flies," she cried, "for the honor of Harby. Whoever challenges the honor of Harby will find it a very dragon, with teeth and claws and a fiery breath."

Halfman sprang to his feet, too, and gave the gallant girl a military salute. Every fibre of him now tingled with loyalty to the royal quarrel; he was a King's man through and through, had been so for sure from his cradle.

"Lady," he almost shouted, "you make a gallant warrior, and I will be proud to serve you." Seeing the surprise in her eyes, he hurried on: "Lady, I am an old soldier, an old sailor. I have seen hot service in hot lands; have helped to take towns and helped to hold towns, and if it be your pleasure, as it will be your prudence, to avail of my aid, I will show

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you how we can maintain this place against an army."

Brilliana rested her hands on the table, and, leaning forward, looked steadily into Halfman's face. He accepted the scrutiny steadily; he was all in all her servant. She seemed to read so much.

"If your news be true," she said, "and if you do not overboast your skill, why, I shall be very glad of your aid and counsel."

"Your hand on that, gallant captain," clamored Halfman, all aflame of pride and pleasure. And across the oaken table the Lady of Harby and the adventurer clasped hands in compact.

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IV

THE LEAGUER OF HARBY

HALFMAN proved himself a creditable henchman. There was much to do and little time to do it in, for any hour might bring news that the enemy was near at hand. Brilliana, as he told her and as she knew, would have done well without him, once she had warning of danger, but, as she told him and as he knew, she did very much better with him. There was no help to be had in the neighborhood, but by Halfman's advice a message was trusted to a sure hand to be carried to Sir Randolph Harby, of Harby Lesser, now with the King, telling him of what was threatened. All the servants were assembled in the great hall, and there Brilliana made them a stirring little speech, to which Halfman listened with applauding pulses. She told them how Harby was menaced; she told them what she meant to do. She and Captain Halfman meant to hold the place for the King so long as there was a place to hold. But she would constrain none to stay with her, and she offered to

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all who pleased the choice to go down into the village and bide there till the business was ended one way or the other. Not a man of the little household, nor a woman, offered to budge. Perhaps they did not care very much about the quarrel, but they all loved very dearly their wild, high-spirited young mistress, and it was "God save Brilliana!" they were thinking while they shouted "God save the King!"

This was how it came to pass that when the hundred men from Cambridge, under the command of Captain Evander Cloud, made an end of their forced march, they found the iron gates of Harby's park closed against them. This was in itself a matter of little moment, needing but the united efforts of half a dozen stout fellows to arrange. But it was the hint significant of more to follow. The Puritan party tramping through the park was greeted, as it neared the moat, with a volley, purposely aimed high, which brought them to a halt. The Puritans eyed grimly a place whose great natural strength had been most ingeniously increased by skilful fortification, and while their leader advanced alone and composedly across the space between the invaders and the walls of Harby, the followers were bale to note how all the windows

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were barricaded and loop-holed, and how full of menace the ancient place appeared.

Evander Cloud advanced across the grass until he was within a few feet of the moat. Then an upper window was thrown open, its wooden curtain removed, and a young, fair woman appeared at the opening and quietly asked of the Puritan the meaning of his presence.

Evander Cloud saluted the lady; he could see that she was young and comely. His own face was in shadow and the chatelaine could not distinguish its features.

"Have I the honor to address the Lady Brilliana Harby?" he asked.

"I am the Lady Brilliana Harby," the girl answered. "What is your business here?"

"I come, madam," Evander replied, "a servant of the Parliament and of the English people, to safeguard this mansion in their name."

"You may speak for the London Parliament," Brilliana said, firmly, "but I think you are too bold to speak in the name of the English people. As for this poor house, it can safeguard itself very well, with the help of God."

"Madam," responded Evander, "I am empowered to take by force what I would gladly gain by parley."

"This house is the King's house," Brill-

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iana said, scornfully, "and does not yield to thieves."

"It is the King's evil advisers who have forced civil war upon the land," Evander replied, gravely. "And it is in the King's name and for the King's sake that we would secure this stronghold."

"Ay," retorted Brilliana, derisively. "And do the King honor by hauling down the King's flag. No more words. This is Loyalty House. You have ten minutes in which to withdraw your men. At the end of that time we shall fire again, and you will find that we can shoot straight. And so you may go to the devil."

Evander would have appealed anew, but with her last word Brilliana disappeared from the window, which in another moment was barricaded as stubbornly as before.

And this was the beginning of the siege of Harby House.

Mr. Samuel Marfleet, in his "Diurnal of certain events of moment happening of late at Harby," is very eloquent over the coming of the little company. He sees in them the deliverers from Dagon, the destroyers of Babylon, and in sundry heated if confused allusions to the worship of Ashtaroth, it seems certain that the indignant school-master was vehemently

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protesting against the popularity of Brilliana. He probably goes too far, however, when he interprets the silence of Harby villagers as the Cambridge company marched through the main street as the silence too great for speech of a liberated people. Harby villagers were, for the most part, serenely indifferent to the quarrels of the court and the Parliament, but they had a hearty liking for Brilliana, and would, if they could, very likely have shown active resentment at the attack upon her home. But with nobody to lead them, there was nothing for them to do but to stare at the grave-faced men in sober clothes with guns upon their shoulders and steel upon their breasts who tramped along towards Harby Hall. Even to the siege itself they were perforce indifferent, seeing very little of it, for the parliamentary leader took care that none of them came into Harby park, and did not, as we may gather from occasional asperities in the "Diurnal," greatly encourage even the visits of Mr. Marfleet himself.

The full chronicle of that siege does not concern us here. Those that are curious in the matter may seek for ampler information, if they will, in the Marfleet "Diurnal." Thanks to its situation, thanks to the experience of adventurer Halfman in barricading windows and so loop-

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holing them for musketry as fully to command the moat on all sides, Harby Hall proved a hard nut to crack. It was but child's play, indeed, if you chose to compare it with the later leaguer of Lathom, but to those immediately concerned, and to Harby village, all open mouths and open eyes, the business was a very Iliad. There was a great deal of powder burned and but little blood shed. The little Parliament party soon learned that there was no taking the place by a rush or a ruse, that it was discretion to keep due distance and invest. For the besieged, on the other hand, there was no chance of a sortie, their numbers being so few and their provisions were sorely scarce. If no one could for the moment get into Harby, neither could any one get out of Harby.

So day succeeded day, and Halfman found them all enchanted days. He was inevitably much in the company of the lady, and he played the part of an honest gentleman ably. He made the most of his odd scholarship, of that part of his knowledge of the world best likely to commend him to the favor of a gentlewoman; his buccaneering enterprises veiled themselves under the vague phrase of foreign service. He had been in tight places a thousand times; he weighed them as trifles against a chance to win money

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and the living toys that money can buy. But it was new to him to hold a fort under the command of a woman, and the woman herself was the newest, strangest thing he had ever known. Ever the lover of his abandoned art, he conceived shrewdly enough the character that would not displease Brilliana and played it very consistently: the soldier of fortune true, but one that had tincture of letters and would be a scholar if he could. So the siege hours were also hours of such companionship as he had never experienced, ever desired; he ripened in the sunshine of a girl's kindliness, and he deliberately tied, as it were, the foul pages of his book of memory together with the pink ribbon of a girl's garter. He would have been content for the siege to last forever. But the siege did not last forever.

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V

A MONSTROUS REGIMENT

In the great hall at Harby a motley fellowship were assembled. If a stranger from a strange land, wafted thither on some winged Arabian carpet or flying horse of ebony, could have beheld the place and the company, he would have been hard put to it to find any reasonable explanation of what his eyes witnessed. In the middle of the hall some five singular figures stood on line: two tall, powerful lads with foolish faces, flagrant farm-hands; an old, bowed man with the snow of many winters on his hair; an impish lad who might have welcomed fourteen springs; and, finally, a rubicund, buxom woman with very red cheeks, very blue eyes, very brown hair, whose person suggested the kitchen a league off. Each of these persons handled a pike, carrying it at an angle different from that of the others, and each of them gazed with painfully attentive stare at the oaken table near the hearth upon which Hercules Halfman sat learnedly expounding the mysteries of the pike drill,

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while Thoroughgood stood between him and the awkward squad to illustrate in his own person and with the pike he carried the teachings of the instructor.

"Order your pikes," Halfman commanded. "Advance your pikes. Shoulder your pikes." Then, as these orders were obeyed deftly enough by Thoroughgood and with bewildering variety by the others, he continued, "Trail your pikes," and then broke sharply off to expostulate with one of the farm-hands.

"Now, Timothy Garlinge, call you that trailing of a pike. Why, Gammer Satchell carries herself more soldierly."

Timothy Garlinge grinned loutishly at this rebuke, but the fat dame whom Halfman's flourish indicated seemed to dilate with satisfaction.

"It were shame," she chuckled, "if a handy lass could not better a lobbish lad."

The impish lad grinned derision.

"Ay," he commented; "but an old fool's best at her spits and griddles."

A most unmilitary titter rippled along the rank but broke upon the rock of Mrs. Satchell's anger. It might have seemed to many that it were impossible for the dame's cheeks to be any redder, but Mistress Satchell's visage

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showed that nature could still work miracles. With face a rich crimson from chin to forehead, she made to hurl herself upon the leering, fleering mannikin, but was caught in the unbreakable restraint of neighbor Clupp's clasp.

"You limb, I'll griddle you!" Mistress Satchell gasped, panting in the embracing arms. Halfman played the peace-maker with a sour smile.

"There, there, goody," he expostulated; "youth will have its yelp."

He turned with something of a yawn to Thoroughgood.

"Why a devil did you press gossip cook into the service?"

Thoroughgood shook his head protestingly.

"Nay, the virago volunteered," he explained, with a look that seemed to supplement speech in the suggestion that it were best to let Mistress Satchell have her own way. This was evidently Mistress Satchell's own view of the matter.

"Truly," she exclaimed, "if my lady, being no more than a woman, is man enough to garrison her house against the Roundheads, she cannot deny me, that am no less than a woman, the right to handle a pike."

Halfman, eying the dame's assertive rotun-

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dities, thought that he would be indeed a quarrelsome fellow who should deny her evident femininity.

"You are a lovely logician," he approved. "Enough."

Then resuming his sententious tone of military command, he took up the task where he had left it off.

"Trail your pikes."

The order was this time obeyed by the company with something approaching resemblance to the action of Thoroughgood, and Halfman went on.

"Cheek your pikes."

Out of the confused cluttering of weapons which ensued, Timothy Garlinge emerged tremulous.

"Please, sir," he gurgled, "I've forgotten how to cheek my pike."

Halfman mastered exasperation bravely, as, taking a pike from the hands of Thoroughgood, he strove to illuminate rusticity.

"Use your pike thus, noddy," he lessoned, good-naturedly, wielding the weapon with the skill of a practised pikeman. But the illustration was as much lost upon Garlinge as the original command, and in his attempt to imitate it he whirled his arm so recklessly that his com-

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panions scattered in dismay, and Halfman himself was fain to move a step or two backward to avoid the yokel's meaningless sweeps.

"Have a care," he cried. "If you work so wild you will damage your company."

Mrs. Satchell, taking her post in the now restored line, shook her red fist at the delinquent.

"He had best not damage me," she thundered, "or I'll damage him to some purpose."

"Silence in the ranks!" Halfman commanded, sharply. "Charge your pikes," he ordered.

This order was obeyed indifferently and tamely enough by all save the egregious Mrs. Satchell, who delivered so lusty a thrust with her weapon that Halfman was obliged to skip back briskly to avoid bringing his breast acquainted with her steel.

"Nay, woman, warily!" he shouted, half laughing, half angry. "Play your play more tamely. I am no rascally Roundhead."

Mrs. Satchell grounded her weapon and wiped the sweat from her shining forehead with the back of her red hand. There was a deadly earnest in her eyes, a deadly earnest in her speech.

"I cry you mercy," she panted. "But I am a whole-hearted woman, and when you bid me charge I am all for charging."

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Halfman did his best to muffle amusement in a reproving frown. "Limit your zeal discreetly," he urged, and was again the drill sergeant.

"Shoulder your pikes."

The weapons followed the words with some show of decorum.

"Comport your pikes."

Again the evolution was carried out with some degree of accuracy.

"Port your pikes."

Here all followed the word of command fairly well with the exception of Garlinge's fellow-rustic, who simply strove to repeat the order already executed. Halfman turned upon him sharply.

"Now, Clupp," he cried, "will you never learn the difference between port and comport?"

Clupp, the fellow addressed, bashful at finding himself the object of attention, swayed backward and forward with his pikestaff for a pivot, laughing vacantly.

"No, sir," he gaped, stupidly. Master Halfman's lip wrinkled menacingly, and he reached his hand to his staff that lay upon the table.

"Indeed!" he said. "Then I must ask Master Crabtree Cudgel to lesson you."

He advanced threateningly towards the terri-

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fied fellow, but long before he could reach him Dame Satchell had interposed her generous bulk between officer and private, not, however, as was soon shown, from any desire to intercede for the culprit.

"Leave him to me, sir," she entreated, vehemently. "If you love me, leave him to me."

And, indeed, her angry eyes shone warranty that the offender would fare badly at her hands. Halfman waved her aside with a gesture of impatience.

"Mistress Satchell," he protested, "you are a valiant woman, but a rampant amazon."

Dame Satchell's cheeks glowed a deeper crimson, and her variable anger raged from Clupp to Halfman.

"Call me no names," she squalled, "though you do call yourself captain, or I'll call you the son of a—"

However Mistress Satchell intended to finish her objurgation it was not given to the company to learn, for Halfman tripped up her speech with a nimble interruption.

"The son of a pike, so please you," he suggested, with a smile that softened the virago's heart. "There, we have toiled enough to-day and it tests our tempers. Dismiss."

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This command he addressed to the whole of his amazing company; to Dame Satchell he gave a congee with a more than Spanish flourish: "To your pots and pans, valorous."

Dame Satchell, mollified by his compliment, shrugged her fat shoulders. "'Tis little enough I have to put in them," she grumbled. "Roast or boiled, boiled, fried, or larded, all's one, all's none. We'll be mumbling shoe-leather soon."

She sighed heavily at the thought, and moved slowly towards the door at the end of the hall beneath the gallery. Halfman, unheeding her, had turned to the table and was intently poring over the large map that lay there together with a loaded pistol. Thoroughgood gave orders to the men.

"Garlinge and Clupp, go scour the pikes. Tom Cropper, find something to keep you out of mischief. As for you, Gaffer Shard, you may rest awhile."

The old man shook his frosty head vigorously. "Nay, nay," he piped, "I need no rest. My old bones are loyal and cannot tire in a good cause. God save the King."

He gave a shrill cheer which was echoed loudly by men and boy, and so cheering they tramped out of the hall in the trail of Mother

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Satchell, Garlinge staggering under the load of pikes which the lad had officiously foisted on to his shoulder, Clupp laughing vacantly after his manner, and steadfast old Shard waving his red cap and chirping his shrill huzzas.

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VI

HOW WILL ALL END?

WHEN they had all gone and the hall was quiet, Thoroughgood came slowly down with a puzzled frown on his honest, weather-beaten face to where Halfman humped over his map.

"Where's the good of drilling clowns and cooks?" he asked, surlily. He talked like one thoroughly weary, but his mood of weariness seemed to melt before the sunshine of Halfman's smile as he lifted his head from the map.

"Where's the harm?" he countered. "'Twas my lady's idea to keep their spirits up, and, by God! it was a good thought. She knows how it heartens folk to play a great part in a great business: keeps them from feeling the fingers of famine in their inwards, keeps them from whining, repining, declining, what you will. But I own I did not count on the presence of Gammer Cook in the by-play."

"I could not see why she should be kept out of the mummery," Thoroughgood responded, "if she had a mind for the masking."

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"Perhaps you are right," Halfman answered, meditatively. "My lady's example would make a Hippolyte of any housemaid of them all."

"I do not know what it would make of them," Thoroughgood answered; "but I know this, that it matters very little now."

Halfman swung round on his seat and stared at him curiously.

"Why?" he asked.

"Now that this truce is called," Thoroughgood answered, "that the Roundhead captain may have speech with my lady."

"Why, what then?" questioned Halfman, with his eyes so fixed on Thoroughgood's that Thoroughgood, dogged as he was, averted his gaze.

"Naught's left but surrender," he grunted, between his teeth. The words came thickly, but Halfman heard them clearly. He raised his right hand for a moment as if he had a thought to strike his companion, but then, changing his temper, he let it fall idly upon his knee as he surveyed Thoroughgood with a look that half disdained, half pitied.

"My lady will never surrender," he said, quietly, with the quiet of a man who enunciates a mathematical axiom. "You know that well enough."

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Thoroughgood shrugged plaintive, protesting shoulders.

"We've stood this siege for many days," he muttered. "Food is running out; powder is running out. Even the Lady Brilliana cannot work miracles."

Halfman rose to his feet. His eyes were shining and he pressed his clinched hands to his breast like a man in adoration.

"The Lady Brilliana can work miracles, does work miracles daily. Is it no miracle that she has held this castle all these hours and days against this rebel leaguer? Is it no miracle that she has poured the spirit of chivalry into scullions and farm-hands and cook-wenches so that not a Jack or Jill of them but would lose bright life blithely for her and the King and God? Is it not a miracle that she has transmuted, by a change more amazing than anything Master Ovid hath recorded in his Metamorphoses, a villanous old land-devil and sea-devil like myself into a passionate partisan? But what of me? God bless her! She is my lady-angel, and her will is my will to the end of the chapter."

He dropped in his chair again as if exhausted by the vehemence of his words and the emotion which prompted them. Thoroughgood contemplated him sourly.

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"You prate like a play-actor," he snarled. Halfman's whole being flashed into activity again. He was no more a sentimentalist but now a roaring ranter.

"Because I was a play-actor once," he shouted, "when I was a sweet-and-twenty youngling."

Thoroughgood eyed Halfman with a sudden air of distrust.

"You never told me you were a play-actor," he growled. "You spoke only of soldiering."

Halfman laughed flagrantly in his face.

"Godamercy, man, there has been scant time to tell you my life's story. We have had other cats to whip. Yes, I was a play-actor once, and played for great poets, for men whose names have never tickled your ears. But the owl-public would have none of me, and, owllike, hooted me off the boards. But I've had my revenge of them. I've played a devil's part on the devil's stage for thirty red years. Nunc Plaudite."

The Latin tag dropped dead at the porches of John Thoroughgood's ears, but those ears pricked at part of Halfman's declamation.

"What kind of parts?" he asked, drawing a little nearer to the soldier of fortune, whose experiences fascinated his inexperience.

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Halfman shrugged his shoulders and favored honest Thoroughgood with a bantering, quizzical smile.

"All kinds of parts," he answered. "How does the old puzzle run? Tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor, ploughboy, gentleman, thief. I think I have played all those parts, and others, too. Fling beggar and pirate into the dish. But I tell you this, honest John, I have never played a part so dear to me as that of captain to this divine commander. I thank my extravagant stars that steered me home to serve her."

"You cannot sing her praises too sweetly for my ears," Thoroughgood answered. "But there is an end to all things, and it looks to me as if we were mighty near to an end of the siege of Harby. Why else should there be a truce called that the Roundhead captain may have speech with my lady."

"Honest John Thoroughgood," Halfman answered, with great composure, "you are not so wise as you think. This Roundhead captain has sent us hither the most passionate pleadings to be admitted to parley. Why deny him? It will advantage him no jot, but it is possible we may learn from the leakage of his lips something at least of what is going on in the world."

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"What is there to learn?" asked Thoroughgood. Halfman shook his head reprovingly.

"Why, for my part, I should like to learn why in all this great gap of time nothing has been done to help one side or the other. If the gentry of Harby have made no effort to relieve us, neither, on the other hand, has our leaguer been augmented by any reinforcements. If my lady has been surprised that Sir Blaise Mickleton has made no show of coming to her succor, I, for my part, am woundily surprised that the Cropheads of Cambridge have sent no further levies for our undoing."

"Why, for that matter—" Thoroughgood began, and then suddenly broke off. "Here comes my lady," he said, turning and standing in an attitude of respectful attention.

Halfman had known of her coming before his companion spoke. The Lady Brilliana had come out on to the gallery from the door near the head of the stairway, and Halfman was conscious of her presence before he lifted his eyes and looked at her. She was not habited now, as on the day when he first beheld her, in her riding-robe of green, but in a simple house-gown chosen for the ease and freedom it allowed to a great lady who had suddenly found that she had much to do. The color of the stuff, a crimson,

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as being a royal, loyal color, well became her fine skin and her dark curls and her bright, imperious eyes. She was followed by her serving-woman, Tiffany, a merry girl that Thoroughgood adored, and one that would in days gone over have been likely to tickle the easy whimsies of Halfman. Now he had no eyes, no thoughts, save for her mistress, the lass unparalleled.

Brilliana was speaking to Tiffany even as she entered the gallery.

"Strip more lint, Tiffany," she ordered; "and bid Andrew be brisk with the charcoal."

Her voice was as buoyant as the song of a free bird, and her step on the stair as light as if there were no such thing in the world as a leaguer. Tiffany crossed the gallery and disappeared through the opposite door. Brilliana, as she descended the stair, diverted her speech to Thoroughgood.

"John Thoroughgood, I saw from the lattice our envoys bringing the Parliament man down the elm walk. To them at once. They must not unhood their hawk till he come to our presence."

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VII

MISTRESS AND MAN

WHEN Thoroughgood had left the hall and Brilliana came to the floor, Halfman questioned her, very respectfully, but still with the air of one who has earned the friendly right to put questions.

"Why do you see this black-jack?" he asked. Brilliana smiled at him as radiantly as if the holding of a house against armed enemies was the properest, pleasantest business imaginable.

"With the littlest good-will in the world, I promise you," she answered. "But, you know, he so plagued for the parley that it was easier to try him than deny him. Besides, good friend and captain, I learn from what I read in Master Froissart's Chronicles that it were neither customary nor courteous to deny conference to a supplicating enemy."

Halfman adored her for her courage, for her calm assumption of success.

"How if he but come to spy out our strate-

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gies?" he asked. "The leanness of our larder? Our empty bandoliers?"

Brilliana beamed back at him with her bewildering confidence.

"I have thought of that, too," she admitted. "But he shall not find us at our wit's-end. Seek Simon Butler, friend captain. Though our cellars are near empty he will make shift to find you some full flagons. Bring hither a bunch of your subalterns, the rosiest, the most jovial, if any still carry such colors and boast such spirit; let them gather in the banqueting-hall, where, with such wit as French wine can give, let them sing as if they were merry and well fed. Our sanctimonious spy-out-the-nakedness-of-the-land must think we are well victualled, he must think we are well mannered."

Halfman made her a sweeping reverence which was not without its play-actor's grace, though its honesty might have pardoned a greater awkwardness.

"We are well womaned, lady," he asseverated, "with you for our leader. By sea and by land I have served some great captains, but never one greater than you for constancy and manly valor."

Brilliana's bright face took a swift look of gravity and she gave a little sigh.

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"The King's cause," she said, soberly, "might turn a child into a champion."

The steady loyalty that made her words at once a psalm and a battle-cry bade Halfman's pulses tingle. Who could be found unfaithful where this fair maid was so faithful? Yet he remembered their isolation and the memory made him speak.

"I marvel that none of your neighbors have tried to lend us a hand?"

"How could they?" Brilliana asked, astonished. "The brave are with the King at Shrewsbury; the stay-at-homes are not fighters."

"Hum," commented Halfman. "What of Master Paul Hungerford?"

Brilliana shrugged her shoulders.

"A miserly daw, who would not risk a crown to save the crown."

Halfman questioned again.

"What of Master Peter Rainham?"

Brilliana shrugged again.

"A dull, sullen skinflint waiting on event."

Halfman's inventory was not complete.

"You have yet a third neighbor," he said, "and, as I heard, a prodigal in protestation. What of Sir Blaise Mickleton?"

Brilliana's lips twitched with a derisive smile.

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"Sir Blaise, honest gentleman, loves good cheer and good ease. I think he would not quit the board if Armageddon were towards. He will be for eating, he will be for drinking, he will be for sleeping, and in the mean time God's chosen gentlemen have learned the value of living so long as to grant them a death for their King."

Her voice had risen to a cry of defiance, but now it dropped again to its former note of bantering irony.

"What a wonderful world it is which can hold at once such men as my cousin Randolph or you or Rufus Quaryll and these hangbacks who shame Harby. These three are professed my very good suitors, but they have made no move to our help. Well, let them hang for a tray of knaves. We need them not. We know that the King's cause must triumph and so we are wise to be blithe."

Halfman's head was swinging with pleasure. She had counted him in so glibly with the chosen ones, with the servants of God and the King. He was very sure now that his watchword had always been "God and the King."

"The King's cause must triumph," he echoed, his face shining with loyal confidence.

"How we shall all smile a year hence," Brill-

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iana answered, "to think that such pitiful rebels vexed us. But for the moment there is one of these same rebels to be faced—and to be fooled. About our plan, good captain."

Halfman saluted her more enthusiastically than he had ever saluted male commander.

"My general," he vowed, "he shall think these walls hold an army of wassaillers."

He turned on his heel and marched briskly out of the hall. Brilliana looked after him, with the bright smile on her face, till the door of the banqueting-hall closed behind him; then the smile slowly faded from her face.

"I would my spirits were as blithe as my speech," she thought, as she went to the table and bent over it, looking at the open map which Halfman had been studying.

"What is going on in England, the King's England, little England, that should not be big enough to have any room for traitors?"

She put her finger on the spot where Harby figured on the sheet.

"Here," she mused, "we have been sundered from the world for all these days by this Roundhead leaguer, hearing no outside news but the ring of rebel shots and the sound of rebel voices. What has happened? What is happening? When we began the King was at Shrewsbury and the

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Parliament ruled London. What has come to the Parliament since? What has come to the King? Well, Loyalty House will carry the King's flag so long as one stone tops another. We will live as long as we can for his Majesty, and then die for him gamely."

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VIII

THE ENVOY

A SOUND of heavy steps disturbed her meditations. She stood up from her map, blinked down the tears that tried to rise, and turned to face new fortune.

"Here is our enemy," she said to herself, and she forced back the confident color to her cheeks, the confident light to her eyes. The door from the park opened, and John Thoroughgood entered the room, holding by the hand a man in the staid habit of a Puritan soldier, whose eyes were muffled by a folded scarf of silk. Blindfolded though he was, the Puritan followed his guide with a steady and resolute step.

"Halt!" cried Thoroughgood. The stranger stood quietly as if on parade, while Thoroughgood saluted his mistress.

"Unhood your hawk," Brilliana ordered. Thoroughgood, obedient, unpicked the knot of the handkerchief, revealing his companion's face. Brilliana observed with a hostile curiosity a tallish, well-set, comely man of about

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thirty years of age, whose smooth, well-featured face asserted high breeding and a gravity which deepened into melancholy in the dark expressive eyes and lightened into lines of humor about the fine, firm mouth. For a moment, with the removal of the muffle, he seemed dazzled by the change from dark to light; then, as command of his vision returned, he observed Brilliana and made her a courteous salutation which she returned coldly. She made a gesture of dismissal to Thoroughgood, who went out, and the Lady of Loyalty was left alone with her enemy.

There was a moment's silence as the pair faced each other, the man quietly discreet, the woman openly scornful. She was under the same roof with a rebel in arms, and the thought sickened her. She broke the silence.

"You petitioned to see me." With the sound of her voice she found new vehemence, new indignation. "Do your rebels offer unconditional surrender?"

The circumstances of the astonishing question brought for the moment a slight smile to the grave face of the Parliament man.

"It was scarcely with that thought," he answered, "that I sought for a parley."

Though the man's smile had been short-lived, Brilliana had seen it and loathed him for it.

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Though the man's manner was suave, it seemed to wear the suavity of success and she loathed him for that, too.

"We waste time," she cried, impatiently, "with any other business than your swift submission."

Then as she saw him make an amiably protesting gesture she raged at him with a rising voice.

"Oh, if you knew how hard it is for me to stand in the same room with a renegade traitor you would, if such as you remember courtesy, be brief in your errand."

The man showed no consciousness of the insult in her words and in her manner save than by a courteous inclination of the head and a few words of quiet speech.

"Much may be pardoned to so brave a lady."

Brilliana struck her hand angrily upon the table once and again.

"For God's sake do not praise me!" she almost screamed, "or I shall hate myself. Your errand, your errand, your errand!"

The enemy was provokingly imperturbable.

"You have a high spirit," he said, "that must compel admiration from all. That is why I would persuade you to wisdom. I came hither

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from Cambridge by order of Colonel Cromwell."

Brilliana's lips tightened at the sound of the name which the envoy pronounced with so much reverence.

"The rebel member for Cambridge," she sneered—"the mutinous brewer. Are you a vassal of the man of beer?"

There was a quiet note of protest in the reply of the envoy.

"Colonel Cromwell is not a brewer, though he would be no worse a man if he were. I am honored in his friendship, in his service. He is a great man and a great Englishman."

"And what," Brilliana asked, "has this great man to do with Harby that he sends you here?"

"He sends me here," the Puritan answered, "to haul down your flag."

"That you shall never do," Brilliana answered, steadily, "while there is a living soul in Harby."

The Puritan protested with appealing hands.

"You are in the last straits for lack of food, for lack of fuel, for lack of powder."

Brilliana made a passionate gesture of denial.

"You are as ignorant as insolent," she asserted. "Loyalty House lacks neither provisions nor munitions of war."

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There was a kind of respectful pity in the stranger's face as he watched the wild, bright girl and hearkened to the vain, brave words.

"Nay, now—" he began, out of the consciousness of his own truer knowledge, but what he would have said was furiously interrupted by a volume of strange sounds from the adjoining banqueting-hall. There was a rattle and clink as of many pewter mugs banged lustily upon an oaken table; there was a shrill explosion of laughter, the work of many merry voices; there was the grinding noise of heavy chairs pushed back across the floor for the greater ease of their occupants; there was a tapping as of pipe-bowls on the board, and then over all the mingled din rose a voice, which Brilliana knew for the voice of Halfman, ringing out a resonant appeal.

"The King's health, friends, to begin with."

All the noises that had died down to allow Halfman a hearing began again with fresh vigor. It was obvious to the most unsophisticated listener that here was the fag end of a feast and the moment for the genial giving of toasts. Many voices swelled a loyal chorus of "The King, the King!" and had the great doors of the banqueting-hall been no other than bright glass it would have been scarce easier for the man and woman in the great hall to realize

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what was happening, the revellers rising to their feet, the drinking-vessels lifted high in air with loyal vociferations, and then the silence, eloquent of tilted mugs and the running of welcome liquor down the channels of thirsty throats. This silence was broken by some one calling for a song, to which call he who had proposed the King's health answered instantly and with evident satisfaction. His rich if somewhat rough voice came booming through the partitions, carolling a ballad to which the Puritan listened with a perfectly unmoved countenance, while the Lady Brilliana's eager face expressed every signal of the liveliest delight.

This was the song that came across the threshold:

"What creature's this with his short hairs,
His little band and huge long ears,
That this new faith hath founded?
The Puritans were never such,
The saints themselves had ne'er so much,
Oh, such a knave's a Roundhead."

A yell of pleasure followed this verse, and a tuneless chorus thundered the refrain, "Oh, such a knave's a Roundhead," with the most evident relish for the sentiments of the song. Brilliana looked with some impatience at the

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unruffled face of her adversary, and when the immediate clamor dwindled she addressed him, sarcastically:

"These revellers," she said, "would not seem to be at the last extremity. But their festival must not deafen our conference."

She advanced to the door of the banqueting-room and struck against it with her hand. On the instant silence she opened the door a little way and spoke through softly, as if gently chiding those within.

"Be merry more gently, friends. Sure, I cannot hear the gentleman speak. Though," she added, reflectively, as she closed the door and returned again to the table she had quitted —"though God knows he talks big enough."

The Puritan clapped his palms together as if in applause, an action that somewhat amazed her in him, while a kindly humor kindled in his eyes.

"Bravely staged, bravely played," he admitted, while he shook his head. "But it will not serve your turn, for it may not deceive me. I had a message this morning from my Lord Essex. There has been hot fighting; Heaven has given us the victory; the King's cause is wellnigh lost at the first push."

Brilliana felt her heart drumming against her

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stays, but she turned a defiant face on the newsmonger.

"I do not believe you," she answered. "The King's cause will always win."

The soldier took no notice of her denial; he felt too sure of his fact to hold other than pity for the leaguered lady. He quietly added:

"My Lord Essex advises me further that reinforcements are marching to me well equipped with artillery against which even these gallant walls are worthless. Be warned, be wise. You cannot hope to hold out longer. For pity's sake, yield to the Parliament."

Brilliana waved his pleas away with a dainty, impatient flourish.

"You chatter republican vainly. I have store of powder. I will blow this old hall heaven high when I can no longer hold it for the King."

Her visitor looked at her sadly, made as if to speak, paused, and then appeared to force himself to reluctant utterance.

"Lady," he said, slowly, "though we be opponents, we share the same blood. Let a kinsman entreat you to reason."

If the civil-spoken stranger had struck her in the face with his glove Brilliana could not have been more astonished or angered. She moved

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a little nearer to him, interrogation in her shining eyes and on her angry cheeks.

"Are you mad?" she gasped. "How could such a thing as you be my kinsman?"

She had taunted him again and again during their brief interview and he had shown no sign of displeasure. He showed no sign of displeasure now, answering her with simple dignity.

"Very simply. A lady of your race, your grandsire's sister, married a poor gentleman of my name and was my father's mother."

Brilliana drew back a little as if she had indeed received a blow. Involuntarily, she put up her hand to her eyes as if to shut out the sight of this importunate fellow.

"I have heard something of that tale," she whispered, "but dimly, for we in Harby do not care to speak of it. When my grandsire's sister shamed her family by wedding with a Puritan her people blotted her from their memory. You will not find her picture on the walls of Harby."

"The loss is Harby's," the soldier answered, "for I believe she was as fair as she was good. She married an honest gentleman named Cloud, whose honesty compelled him to profess the faith he believed in. My name is Evander Cloud."

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He waited for a moment as if he expected her to speak, but she uttered no word, only faced him rigidly with hatred in her gaze.

Seeing her silent, he resumed:

"It was this sad kinship pushed me to a parley wherein, perhaps, I have something strained my strict duty. But the voice of our common blood cried out in me to urge you to reason. You have done all that woman, all that man could do. Yield now, while I can still offer you terms, and your garrison shall march out with all the honors of war, drums beating, matches burning, colors flying."

He was very earnest in his appeal, and Brilliana heard him to the end in silence, with her clinched hands pressed against her bosom. Then she turned fiercely upon him and her voice was bitter.

"Sir," she cried, "if I hated you before for a detested rebel, think how I hate you now, if you be, even in so base a way, my kinsman."

She turned away from him, lifting her clasped hands as if in supplication.

"Oh, Heaven, to think that a disloyal, hypocritical, canting Puritan could brag to my face that he carries one drop of our loyal blood in his false heart."

She turned to him again with new fury.

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"You are doubly a traitor now, and if you are wise you will keep out of my power, for my heart aches with its hate of you. Go! Five minutes left of your truce gives you just time to return to your rebels. If you overlinger in our lines but one minute you are no longer an envoy: you are an enemy and a spy and shall swing for it."

She reached out her hand to strike the bell upon the table, while Evander Cloud, still impassive, paid a salutation to his unwilling hostess and made a motion to depart. But on the instant both were chilled into immobility by an amazing interruption. Brilliana's hand never touched the bell; Evander's hand never found the handle of the door. For between the beginning and the end of their action came a sudden rattle of musketry, distant but deafening, followed on the instant by a whirlwind of furious cries and noise.

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IX

HOW THE SIEGE WAS RAISED

THE man and the woman glared at each other, each in swift suspicion of treason. The Lady of Harby was the quickest to act upon impulse. She snatched up the pistol that lay upon the table and levelled it with a steady hand at Evander.

"Do you use your trust to betray us?" she shrilled. "It shall not save you."

Even a less-experienced soldier could have seen from the sure way in which Brilliana handled her weapon that his life was in real peril, but he paid no more heed to her menace than if she was threatening him with her glove or her fan.

"Fighting outside!" he cried. Turning to the woman he asked, with a fierceness that contrasted with his previous calm, "Who is the traitor here?"

His sword was naked in his hand as he spoke and he made a rush for the door. But before he could reach it it was flung open in his face

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and Halfman rushed in, waving his drawn sword, and followed by Thoroughgood carrying a gun and Garlinge and Clupp armed with pikes.

Inevitably bewildered by the sudden turn in the tide of events, Evander Cloud gave ground for a moment before the onrush, while Halfman, staggering like a drunken man, reeled forward towards Brilliana, shrieking:

"There is fighting in the rebel lines. Help has come at last."

Whatever joy the tidings gave to Brilliana, she wasted no words from the needs of the moment. Pointing to Evander where he stood, irresolute in surprise, she commanded, "Secure that man!"

Evander's resolution returned to him with the sound of her voice, but he was one against too many. While he tried to engage the blade of Halfman, a swinging blow from the pike of Garlinge knocked his weapon out of his hand, and in another moment he was gripped in the grasp of the two young country giants, while Thoroughgood covered him with his musketoon.

"This is treachery," he gasped; but no one paid any attention to his protest. Halfman, convinced that the Puritan was a sure prisoner, swaggered up to Brilliana with all the arrogance of a stage herald.

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"Dear lord," he shouted, "dear lady, a company of Cavaliers are galloping up the avenue, a-shouting like devils for the King."

He was flushed and drunk with exhilaration; he could speak no more; the timely episode tickled his tired brain like wine; he caught at the table for support and muttered inarticulately. Thoroughgood, who had secured Evander's fallen sword, interpolated a word of explanation.

"It is Sir Rufus, my lady—Sir Rufus and his friends."

The interruption had been so sudden, the things that had chanced had passed so swiftly, that Brilliana still stood as she had stood when she gave the command to secure Evander. But now all her being seemed alive with a new life.

"I hear them; I hear them!" she cried, exultantly. And, indeed, the sounds came very clearly now of fierce young voices shouting for the King.

"The King! The King!" Brilliana cried, in an ecstasy, and as the loyal syllables died on her lips there came a trampling of near feet, and then through the yawning doorway rushed a covey of young gentlemen waving their drawn swords and yelling their cry, "The King! The King!" As they flooded into the room, bright

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foam on the wave of victorious loyalty, Brilliana knew them all. Sir Rufus Quaryll, her neighbor and hot lover; the Lord Fawley, who had vainly wooed her for wife; Sir John Radlett, who had the sense to love her and the sense to hold his tongue; Captain Bardon, the bold and bluff; and young Lord Richard Ingrow, with the delicate, girlish face that masked the amazing rake. She seemed to see them as in some golden dream, seemed to hear a-down the vistas of dreams the echoes of their gallant cries of "God save the King!" Then as the new-comers knelt before her she knew that all was true.

"God bless you, gentlemen!" she cried, from a full heart. "You are very well come."

Rufus Quaryll, neighbor and wooer, was the first to speak, looking up at her with rapture in his eyes of reddish brown.

"Imperial lady, the siege of Harby is raised."

Brilliana flung out her hands to him, and as he caught and kissed them she raised him to his feet.

"Your news is music," she said, and her voice was as blithe as a song.

"We are heralds of victory," Rufus said, as he stood and looked into her eyes.

My Lord Fawley rose from his knees with a whoop.

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"We have pelted the rebels from Edgehill," he shouted. Sir John Radlett caught him up. "We banged them finely," he trumpeted. Young Ingrow, with a flush on his fine cheeks, sang out a shrill "Hurrah for Prince Rupert!" and bluff Bardon rubbed his hands as he chuckled, "He brushed them into dust."

All the Cavaliers spoke rapidly and eagerly, flinging their phrases each on top of the other. Rufus summed up all in a single splendid sentence.

"The road lies plain to London."

"Heaven be praised," Brilliana ejaculated, and then, wonder treading on the heels of thankfulness, she questioned, "How came you here so timely?"

My Lord Fawley broke into a boisterous laugh which seemed to rattle among the rafters.

"Oh, Lord, the best jest in the world," he bellowed. Bardon clapped a hand on lad Ingrow's shoulder.

"Our Ingrow writes a clerky hand," he asserted. Ingrow, stabbing at Bardon's stout ribs with slender fingers, riposted:

"And our Bardon has a merry invention."

Brilliana looked commands and entreaties at the row of jolly, laughing faces.

"Do not play the sphinx with me," she

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pleaded. Rufus immediately made himself interpreter of the mirth.

"Why, between us we forged a letter from my lord high damnable traitor Essex to your enemy here, advising him of reinforcements, assuring him of the King's defeat."

"Yes," chirruped the Lord Fawley, "and the gull-gaby swallowed the bait."

"When we rode up but now," Radlett interposed, "his rascals received us with open arms."

Rufus smiled sardonically as he completed the story of the entrapment.

"They took us for Essex men because of our orange-tawny scarves, but they found out when too late that we were right-tight Cavalier lads and no crop-eared curmudgeons. Why, we were in the thick of them with sword and pistol before they had stayed from snuffling their psalms of welcome."

Brilliana held out her hand again for her cousin's hand and clasped it manfully.

"How rich is the ring of victory in your loyal voice," she sighed. "My last public news was of the King's stay at Shrewsbury. Then these curmudgeons raced hot-foot from Cambridge to pull down my flag. But 'This is Loyalty House,' says I, and 'Go to the devil,' says I—forgive me, sirs, if I raged unmaidenly—and I

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slammed the door in their sour faces. Then came such a tintamar, rebels firing on us, we firing on rebels, and so in such noise and thunder we have been eclipsed out of the world these weary days.

"Never were such days better lived through since the world began," said Rufus. "You do well to call this Loyalty House which has held out so well against the King's enemies."

Brilliana now turned to where Halfman stood apart, his hands resting on the hilt of his sword, and the shadow of a frown on his forehead as he eyed the babbling gallants.

"That Loyalty House should hold out so long as it could was from the first my purpose," she said. "But that it was able to hold out so long as it did was greatly due to the courage and the counsels of this brave gentleman."

As she spoke she pointed to Halfman, whose dark face flushed with pleasure as he gave back the stares of the astonished Cavaliers who up to now had left him unnoticed.

"Gentles," she went on, "this is Captain Halfman, who warned me of my danger, who helped me in my peril with his soldier's knowledge and his soldier's sword, and who was of my own mind rather to die than to surrender Harby."

Halfman strode forward with a studied grace.

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He felt like Faulconbridge; he felt like Harry at Agincourt; he felt like Coriolanus; he felt exceedingly happy.

"Gallants," he said, with a magnificent salutation, "to have served this lady makes a man know how it had seemed to serve Alexander or Cæsar. Wherefore, a soldier of good-fortune salutes you."

Rufus, who had watched him with something of a sullen eye from the moment of Brilliana's introduction, now answered him with a clearer countenance.

"We greet you, sir," he said, gravely, "with great gratitude and great envy, for, indeed, there is none among us who would not have given his life to be lieutenant to this lady." He accorded the beaming Halfman a military salute, and then, turning to Brilliana, continued:

"Bright Brilliana, your servants and swains yearned to ride to your help when we heard of your peril, but we could not leave the King in the beginning of his enterprise. He gave us glad leave after the victory. 'Tell the brave lady,' he said, 'she shall be our viceroy in Oxfordshire.'"

Brilliana's cheeks blazed with pleasure. "Oh, the dear man," she cried, with clasped hands of rapture. But there was more to come.

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"I think," continued Rufus, "it is more than likely that his Majesty will visit Harby—I should say Loyalty House—ere he rides to London."

Brilliana thrilled with pride—with pleasure. The air about her seemed to swoon with music, to be sweet as roses, to be spangled with golden motes.

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X

PRISONER OF WAR

"I REJOICE," she answered, in a voice unsteady with happiness—such might have been the voice of Semele at the coming of her god—"I rejoice that Loyalty House boasts a roof to shelter his Majesty. For I was minded to blow the place to pieces rather than yield it to this gentleman who would so speciously persuade me to surrender."

As she spoke she glanced disdainfully in the direction of Evander Cloud, who now for the first time since the irruption of the Cavaliers became in any sense an object of public interest. None of the new-comers had paid any heed to the sombre-habited prisoner; Halfman had forgotten his captive in his jealous study of the men who had raised the siege; Thoroughgood, with the Puritan's sword resting idly on his left arm, was as absorbed in the converse of Sir Rufus and his comrades as were his subordinates Garlinge and Clupp, who, though they gripped their prisoner tightly, were as indifferent to his

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existence as if he had been the turbaned dummy of a quintain. But now on the instant every glance was turned on Evander, and Sir Rufus, eying him with much disfavor, asked of Brilliana, "Who is your prisoner?"

Evander made a step forward unrestrained by his guards, and answered for himself composedly.

"I am Captain Cloud, of the parliamentary army, snared under a flag of truce."

He was so well restrained in his speech and carriage, so quiet a contrast to the heated gentlemen who glared at him, that to an uninformed observer he might very well have seemed the judge rather than the one on trial. Rufus snapped at him like an angry dog.

"Well, you tub-thumper, you see that the gentlemen of England are more than a match for pestilent pennyweight rebels."

Evander surveyed his truculent opponent with a tranquil contempt which had its effect in increasing the irritation of the Cavalier.

"You play the valiant braggart to a captive," he commented, quietly. Then he turned to Brilliana as one who had no further desire for treaty with a fellow of this kind.

"Let me remind you, lady, that I came here under a flag of truce."

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Brilliana had forgotten Evander in the exhilaration of her relief. But now that he had come into her mind again, so with his image had flooded in again all the prejudices he provoked, the scorn, the hatred.

"That plea cannot release you," she answered, hotly. "Your time was up, your sword was drawn; I am very sure you would have joined your men."

Evander, whose arms were now released from bondage by Garlinge and Clupp, made a gesture of absolute acquiescence.

"I am very sure I should have joined my men," he answered, calmly. Brilliana rounded on him triumphant.

"Then you are a prisoner of war, fairly taken. Let me have no more words."

As indifferent to her words as to the angry carriage of the Cavaliers, Evander stepped tranquilly back to his place between his warders.

"I have no more words to waste," he said, with a scorn in his voice that stung Brilliana's cheeks to crimson. She turned hurriedly to the little knot of Cavaliers, who chafed at having to witness what they held to be the presumption of a Puritan in daring to bandy words with a lady of quality.

"Gallants," she said, "this merry meeting

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calls for its baptism of wine." As she spoke she struck upon the bell, shrewdly confident that her wishes would be met. "Wine," she added, "the more precious that it is wellnigh the last in our cellars."

As the Cavaliers came about her applauding with word and look, the doors of the banqueting-room parted and Mrs. Satchell entered, full of pomp and apple-red with pleasure, followed by Shard bearing a tray of glasses, and by pretty, dimpling Tiffany bearing a goodly flagon of wine and observing with demure approbation the covey of King's gentlemen.

Mistress Satchell swam like a gall on towards the Cavaliers, her great, red, spoon-shaped face damp with satisfaction. Playing at heroine behind bombarded walls was all very well, but greeting of timely gentry who had set heroines free was infinitely better.

"Heaven bless you, merry gentlemen," she chirruped. "Here is a cup of comfort for you."

"Heaven bless you, merry matron," Bardon answered, as soberly as he could, for indeed the sight of Mistress Satchell in her Sunday best and in her most coming-on humor was not of a nature to strengthen sobriety. Lord Fawley gasped as the virago swaggered towards his companions, and young Ingrow popped his

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handkerchief into his mouth and bit at it while he stared with eyes of nursery wonder at the dame. Radlett winked as if dazzled by the whimsical apparition, and Sir Rufus, familiar with Mrs. Satchell and her vagaries, was the only member of his party who kept his countenance unchanged on her entrance.

Brilliana was sympathetically swift to explain her astonishing handwoman.

"Gentles," she said, "this is Mistress Satchell, who queens it in times of peace over my kitchen, but who has proved herself my very valiant adjutant during the siege."

The dame bridled with pride.

"I can handle a pike, my lords, I promise ye," she asserted; and then, turning to Halfman for confirmation, "Can I not, Master Halfman?"

Halfman slapped his thigh approvingly and answered to the Cavalier with grave voice and smiling eyes.

"Never was pike so handled before, I promise ye."

The tone of his voice mimicked Mrs. Satchell's manner even as the words of it aped her matter, but the dame was too pleased with herself and the world to heed what it was that set the gentlemen laughing.

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"So, so," Radlett hummed approval. "Mrs. Satchell, will you ride with me to the King?"

Mrs. Satchell dipped him a swimming reverence, but she shook her head decisively.

"Your honor means well, but I cannot leave my lady. The Roundheads might come again."

The Lord Fawley had by this seen his glass filled by Tiffany and was staring boldly into her pretty face, much to the exasperation of honest Thoroughgood, chafing in the background.

"Do you handle a pike, prettikins?" Fawley asked. Prettikins dropped him a courtesy and shook her curls.

"No, my lord," she whispered, "I am not very soldierly."

It was now Ingrow's turn to have his glass filled and to stare admiration at the pretty serving-woman.

"If you have a mind to enlist," he said, temptingly, "you shall be ensign in my troop and we'll carry your kirtle for a flag."

Whether Mrs. Satchell considered that Tiffany was like to be embarrassed by the attentions of the gentry, or whether she considered that those attentions diverted too much notice from herself as the heroine of the servants' hall, she certainly came to the rescue, edging her bulk between the girl and Ingrow.

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"She is too green for your grace," she insisted. "You need a fine woman like me for your flag-bearer."

Even Ingrow's readiness found him something at a loss for an answer. He looked as if he feared lest dame Satchell might take him in an embrace. Brilliana, now that all the glasses were charged, decided that the company had tasted enough of Mrs. Satchell's humors.

"I thank you, Mistress Satchell," she said, quietly, and Mrs. Satchell, rightly reading in the tones of her mistress's voice permission to retire, withdrew in good order, beaming and bobbing to all the gentlemen and followed by Shard and Tiffany, who, with lids demurely lowered, avoided recognition of the admiring glances of Fawley and Ingrow.

Brilliana turned to her company and lifted her glass.

"Drink, gentles," she summoned. "Drink 'The King!'"

All the Cavaliers shouted the loyal toast so that the words "The King!" seemed to ring in every nook of the great hall; then every Cavalier drained his glass.

"Ah," sighed Lord Fawley, as he set down his empty vessel, "I could drink the King's health forever."

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"I swear it would sweeten sour ale," Bardon declared.

Young Ingrow took him up. "When it floats on such noble tipple I am a god-swilling nectar." Halfman slapped his chest.

"Come, lads!" he cried; "when Cavaliers drink the King's health they should sing the King's song," and in another moment his mellow voice was setting his friends a sturdy example. "Gallants of England," he warbled:

"Gallants of England, shall not the King land
Safely in town to knock Parliament down?
Shall we not ever strive to endeavor
Glory to win for our King and our crown?
Shall not the Roundhead soon be confounded?
Sa, sa, sa, sa, boys, ha, ha, ha, ha, boys,
Then we'll return home in triumph and joy.
Then we'll be merry, drink sack and sherry,
And we will sing, boys, God save the King, boys,
Cast up our hats, and sing Vive le Roy."

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XI

AT BAY

BRILLIANA and the Cavaliers, stirred by the enthusiasm of Halfman's stanza, caught up the cry commanded and sent it rolling through the hall.

"Vive le Roy! God bless the King!" they shouted, with the loyal tears in their eyes. Brilliana gave Halfman a grateful smile.

"Well sung, well done," she approved. Halfman glowed. Sir Rufus frowned a little. Turning hurriedly to his companions, he said:

"Friends, I have another toast for you. I give you the King's sweet warrior, Oxfordshire's blithe viceroy, 'The Lady of Loyalty House.'"

"Never a better toast in the world," Halfman shouted. "Drink, gallants, drink."

Brilliana crossed her fingers before her face. Through the living lattice her eyes peeped brightly.

"I protest you make too much of me," she pleaded, while Halfman and the Cavaliers quickly filled their glasses again and lifted them

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high in air. A chorus of "The Lady of Loyalty House!" rang out, and again the toast was honored.

"I thank you with all my heart," Brilliana panted, blushing and excited at the tumult and the praise. There was a moment's silence. Everything worth saying seemed to have been said, everything worth doing to have been done. Suddenly, in that silence, Bardon caught sight of Evander where he stood apart, disdainful, between his guards, and the sight pricked his wits. Turning to his mates, he thumbed at the prisoner over his shoulder.

"Should we not make the crop-ear yonder pledge the Lady of Loyalty House?" he questioned. Radlett rubbed approving hands.

"Well thought. Let him honor his conqueror," he began. The Lord Fawley tripped him up with a new proposal.

"Stop, stop; not so fast," he protested. "The fellow has not pledged the King yet. Let him drink the King's health first and be damned to him."

The others applauded, but Ingrow, noting a certain sterner tightening of Evander's mouth, interrupted.

"I'll wager he will not drink," he said, looking maliciously from the flushed faces of the

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Cavaliers to the pale face of the Puritan. Rufus's temper blazed instantly.

"Will not drink, say you!" he cried. "This mewcant shall pledge at our pleasure or taste our displeasure."

He strode to the table, filled a cup of wine, and set it down on the corner nearest to Evander.

"Come, you Roundpoll," he continued—"come, you Geneva mumbler, here is a cup for you to wash down the dust of your dry thoughts. Drink, I give you 'The King.'"

Evander gazed steadfastly at the irate gentleman and made no motion to take the wine. Brilliana, from where she stood, watching him curiously, wrestled with a reluctant admiration of his carriage. Ingrow commented, smoothly, maliciously:

"You see, the gentleman does not drink."

Ingrow's words fanned the Cavalier fire.

"Damn him for a disloyal rat!" Radlett shouted. Halfman elbowed his way past him and addressed Rufus.

"Sweet Sir Rufus," he said, "I have lived in places where a little persuasion has often led folk to act much against their personal inclinations and desires. Out swords and force the toast."

As he spoke he drew his sword with his best

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Mercutio manner, and the suggestion and the naked steel carried contagion. Every gentleman unsheathed his sword; all advanced upon Evander, a line of shining points.

"Bait him, bait him!" Bardon shouted.

Ingrow shrilled, "Tickle him, prick him, pink him till he drinks!"

Though Evander surveyed his enemies as composedly as if they had been children threatening him with pins, Brilliana knew that the spirit of mischief was alive and that the Cavaliers would not boggle at cruelty, six to one, for the sport of making a Parliament man honor the King against his will. She hated the man, but she would not have him so handled. Instantly she stepped between Evander and the Cavaliers, who fell back with lowered points before their hostess.

"Wait, sirs," she ordered, "let me see if my entreaties will not make the bear more gracious."

She took up the cup where Rufus had set it down, and, coming close to Evander, held the vessel to him with her sweetest smile, the smile which, she had been assured a thousand times, would tame a savage and shatter adamant. "Will you not pledge the best gentleman in England?" she asked, with a voice all honey.

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Very courteously Evander took the proffered cup from her fingers and gave her back her smile. Brilliana's heart thrilled with pleasure at this new proof of beauty's victory.

"I will drink at your wish," he said, looking at her with a quiet smile and speaking as if he and she were alone together in the great hall. "I will drink at your wish, but with my own wit." Still looking into the gratified eyes of Brilliana, he lifted the cup.

"I drink," he cried, loud and clear, "to the best man in England. I drink to Colonel Cromwell."

He drained the glass and sent it crashing into the fireplace. Then he folded his arms and faced his antagonists.

Brilliana's heart seemed for a second to stand still. So beauty had not triumphed, after all. Dimly, as one in a dream, she could hear the fury of the Cavaliers find words.

"You black Jack, I will clip your ears," Rufus promised.

"Blood him. Blood him," bawled Fawley.

"Slit his nose," Radlett suggested.

"Duck him in the horse-pond," suggested Bardon.

"Set him in the stocks," Ingrow advised.

Halfman, seeing how Brilliana leaned against

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the table, her face pale as her smock, raged at her daring denier. He stretched out his sword as if to marshal and restrain the passions of the Cavaliers.

"Would it not be properer sport, sirs," he asked, "to tie him in a chair, like Guido Fawkes on November day, and take him through the village that loyal lads may pelt a traitor?"

Once again Halfman's pleasant invention pleased the fancy of his allies.

"Well said," assented Rufus. "Fetch a rope, some one."

Brilliana, hearing, moved a little forward. She had failed and felt shamed. Yet this thing must not happen. She could not leave her enemy thus to the mercy of his enemies. But what she would have said was stayed by a sudden diversion.

Interest in all the events that had so swiftly passed before them had gravely relaxed the vigilance of Evander's guardians. Garlinge and Clupp—a strong Gyas and a strong Cloanthes—open-eyed and open-mouthed, were open-handed also and clawed no clutch upon their prisoner's shoulder. Thoroughgood, confused between jealous thoughts of Tiffany and envious admiration of the manner in which Halfman handled the gentry, was as heedless as his inferiors,

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and was therefore taken too much by surprise to offer the slightest resistance when Evander, suddenly springing from between his guards, snatched from his supine arms the captured sword that had been intrusted to his keeping. Before he or any other of the astonished spectators could take any action Evander had leaped lightly into the alcove of the window, and, dragging by main force the heavy table in front of him, so as to blockade his corner, showed himself snugly intrenched behind a rampart which his single sword might well hope to hold at least for some time against the swords of half a dozen assailants.

"You will find me a spoil sport," he cried, cheerily, as he stood on guard behind the massive bulk of oak. "Dogs, here is a hart at bay; beware his antlers."

"Bravely done, rebel," Brilliana cried, aloud, as if in spite of herself, as she beheld the reckless deed, and "Bravely done, rebel," Halfman echoed, in his reluctant turn, as he heard his lady's words and saw the light of praise on his lady's face. Though he hated the Puritan as cordially as if he had been a King's man all his days, he could not deny his courage, and his scene of effective action made him wish himself in Evander's place, taking the stage so skilfully

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and dominating the situation. But above all this, if Brilliana applauded the rebel's act, then the rebel's life was of some value, and until he received his lady's orders the rebel's life should be sacred to Halfman. So he struck up with his sword the pikes that Garlinge and Clupp levelled, clumsily enough, and were preparing to thrust at Evander over the interposing barrier. At the same moment Rufus, for a very different reason, restrained the action of his comrade Cavaliers, who were making ready for a combined rush, sword in hand, upon their enemy. Rufus saw instantly how well intrenched their enemy lay; it would be hard for any sword to reach him across that width of oak, and even push of pike, when delivered by such loutish fingers as now governed those weapons, might easily be parried by a swordsman so skilful as he guessed Evander to be. But there was no generosity towards a brave adversary in Rufus's action. In his hot ferocity he merely wished to make sure of his quarry as quickly as possible.

"You shall be no hart-royal," he answered, fiercely, taking up the hunter's challenge. "You shall not escape. We shall sound the mort of the deer in a moment. Give me your gun, fellow."

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This last command was addressed to Thoroughgood, who had brought his musketoon to the ready and was waiting irresolute for command. Sir Rufus snatched the weapon from him and was about to aim at Evander when, to his rage, Brilliana stepped between him and his mark.

"Stay your hand, Sir Rufus," she commanded, with a frown on the fair face to which the color had now returned. "It is for me, and for me only, to give orders here. This is my prisoner, and were he ten times a Roundpoll he should have honest handling."

Sir Rufus would fain have protested, would fain have carried his point, but he saw that in the face of her whom it was his heart's desire to please which reduced him to sullen obedience. He shrugged his shoulders. "As you please," he muttered, as he returned the gun to Thoroughgood and, turning on his heel to hide his vexation, joined his comrades, who seemed all to share, discomfited, in his rebuke, and to deprecate the anger of Brilliana. Brilliana went up to the table, and, poising herself against it by pressing the palms of her hands on its surface, looked with gracious entreaty into the grave eyes of Evander, who lowered his sword in respectful greeting.

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XII

A USE FOR A PRISONER

"Sir," said Brilliana, "if you give me your parole you shall have the freedom of Harby."

Evander made her a ceremonious bow.

"Lady, you seem to me to be the only true gentleman on your side of this quarrel, so I will give you my word and my sword."

Holding his sword by the blade, he extended it across the table to Brilliana, whose hand caught its hilt with the firm grasp of one to whom the manage of arms was not unfamiliar. As she stepped back with her trophy Evander pushed the table aside to afford him passage from his alcove, and, saluting the lady, took his former place between his warders. Brilliana returned his salutation with a murmured "It is well." Rufus, disengaging himself from the knot of discomfited Cavaliers, moved towards her and addressed her with faintly restrained impatience.

"In Heaven's name," he begged, "set this Cantwell on one side if you tender him so precious. I have private news for you."

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Brilliana's face wore something of a frown for her presuming friend. "Indeed!" she answered, coldly. Then turning towards Halfman she tendered to him Evander's sword, which he hastened to take from her, kneeling as he did so.

"Captain Cloud is in your care," she said. "Pray you, withdraw your prisoner a little."

Halfman rose, bearing Evander's sword, and went to Evander.

"Will you come this way?" he bade his captive, courteously enough. If Brilliana chose to trust a Roundhead's word, her will was Halfman's law. Evander again saluted Brilliana and followed Halfman to the farther part of the hall. Here in a window-seat, out of ear-shot of the other's speech, he seated himself to commune with his melancholy reflections, while Halfman, after stationing Thoroughgood at a little distance as a nominal guard upon the prisoner, dismissed Garlinge and Clupp from the room and rejoined the Cavaliers. Brilliana, who had still been standing with Sir Rufus, now addressed the others.

"Gentlemen," she said, "you must need sustenance after this morning's work. You will find such poor cheer as Harby can offer in the banqueting-hall. Captain Halfman, will you play the host for me?"

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The Cavaliers, who were, indeed, sharp-set and ever-ready trenchermen, welcomed the proposal each after his own fashion.

"Indeed," averred the Lord Fawley, "I would say good-day to a pasty." "Ay," assented Radlett, "well met, beef or mutton." Ingrow euphemized, "I shall be well content with bread and cheese and dreams," as he glanced admiration at Brilliana. Bardon grunted, "I would sell all my dreams for a slice of cold boar's head."

Halfman addressed them in the character of Father Capulet. "We have a trifling foolish banquet towards." He turned towards the doors of the banqueting-room with the famished gentlemen at his heels; then, noticing that Sir Rufus remained with Brilliana, he stopped and questioned him. "You, sir, will you not eat?"

Rufus answered him with an impatience that was almost anger. "No, no," he said; "I have no hunger. Stay your stomachs swiftly, friends."

He turned again to Brilliana, and stood opposite to her in silence till Halfman and the Cavaliers had quitted the hall. Then Brilliana spoke.

"Well, good news or bad?"

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"Bad," Rufus answered. "Your cousin Randolph is a captive."

Brilliana gave a little cry of regret.

"Bad news, indeed! How did it chance?"

"In the battle," Rufus answered. "The King's standard-bearer was slain and the King's flag fell into the rebel hands."

Brilliana clasped her hands with a sigh, and would have spoken, but Rufus stayed her, hurrying on with his tale.

"That could not be endured, dear lady. So in the dusk Randolph and I put orange scarfs about us that we might be taken for rogues of Essex's regiment, and so, unchallenged, slipped into the enemy's camp. Dear fortune led me to the tent of Lord Essex, and there I found his secretary sitting and gaping at the precious emblem. I snatched it from his fingers and made good my escape, gaining great praise from his Majesty when I laid the sacred silk at his feet."

Brilliana's eyes swam with adoration. "Oh, my gallant friend!" she cried, and held out her hands to him. He caught them both and kissed them, whereat she instantly withdrew them and moved a little away. He followed her, speaking low, passionately.

"Your words mean more than the King's words to me. You know that."

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Brilliana did not look vastly displeased at this wild speech, but she forced a tiny frown and set her finger to her lips.

"Hush!" she said. "What of Randolph?"

"Less fortunate than I," Rufus resumed, in calmer tones, "he ran into the arms of a burly Parliament man, that Cambridge Crophead Mr. Cromwell, who made him prisoner."

"Truly," said Brilliana, thoughtfully, "it is hard luck for him just after his first battle. But 'twill be soon mended. They will exchange him."

Even as she spoke she seemed surprised at the gloomy look that reigned on Rufus's face. His tone was as gloomy as his face as he said, "He was wearing the orange scarf of Essex."

"What then?" Brilliana questioned, still surprised; then, as knowledge flashed upon her, she cried, quickly, "Ah, they will say that he was a spy."

"Ay," Rufus answered, hotly, "the King's spy, God's spy upon enemies of God and King, but still a spy in their eyes."

"But what is to be done?" Brilliana gasped.

"I would that I knew," Rufus answered. "His Majesty has interceded for him and has gained him some days of grace. It is certain that my Lord Essex, if he had his own way,

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would yield him. But he has not his own way, for this stubborn Cromwell fellow clings to his prisoner."

"Why is he so stubborn?" Brilliana asked. Rufus smiled sourly.

"Partly because, like all new-made soldiers, he is punctilious of the rules of war. Partly because he hopes to turn his capture to some account. Poor Randolph had upon him a letter in cipher from the King to a certain lord. Randolph may buy his life with the key to the cipher."

"He will never do that," Brilliana said, in proud confidence of the courage of her house. She was silent for a moment; then she gave a little cry of joy. "I think I can save him," she exclaimed. Rufus stared at her as if she had lost her wits.

"Why, what can you do?" he asked, astonished. Brilliana answered with a glance of profound wisdom. "I think I know a way," and she nodded her head sagely. Then she turned and moved a little space across the hall in the direction of that window-seat where Evander sat ensconced. When she had advanced two or three paces she called to him:

"Captain Cloud, pray favor me with your company for a few moments of speech."

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Evander's consciousness swam to the surface of a pool of gloomy thought at her summons. He rose on the instant and came down the hall towards her.

"I am at your service, lady," he said. Brilliana watched him closely as she questioned.

"You say you are a friend of Mr. Cromwell?"

Evander seemed surprised at the interrogation, but he answered, simply, "I am so favored."

"Does he cherish you in affection?" Brilliana pursued, still watching him closely.

"He loved my father," said Evander. "If I dared to think it I should say he loved me, too. Truly, he has shown me much regard."

Brilliana struck her palms sharply together with the air of one who has solved a difficult problem.

"Your Mr. Cromwell has taken prisoner a cousin of mine whom he threatens to kill as a spy. We will exchange you against Mr. Cromwell's prisoner."

Evander looked steadily back at her with a hint of mild amusement at the corners of his mouth.

"Colonel Cromwell will never exchange a spy," he responded, decisively.

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Rufus, who was listening to the conference, nodded his head in gloomy assent. "That is like enough," he agreed. Brilliana stamped a foot and her eyes snapped vexation.

"We shall see," she said, sharply. She turned away from the two men and moved to a small table against the wall that carried writing materials. Seating herself thereat, she took up a goose-quill and began to write rapidly on a large sheet of paper. When she had finished she looked round, and beckoned Rufus to her side that he might hear what she had written. She read it aloud, with her eyes fixed on Evander's impassive face.

"To Colonel Cromwell, serving with my Lord Essex in the Parliamentary army lately at Edgehill. My cousin, Sir Randolph Harby, is a prisoner in your hands. Your friend, Mr. Evander Cloud, is a prisoner in mine. I will exchange my prisoner for your prisoner; but the life of Mr. Evander Cloud is answerable for the life of Randolph Harby. Such is the sure promise and steadfast vow of his cousin and the King's true subject, Brilliana Harby."

As she read, the dour face of Rufus brightened, and he rubbed his hands in satisfaction at the close.

"By the Lord, an honest thought," he chuckled. "Swing Randolph, swing rat-face."

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Evander smiled disdainfully.

"I am no spy," he asserted, firmly, "and by the laws of war you have no right to my life."

Brilliana turned on him tauntingly.

"You were taken a rebel in arms and your life is at my mercy."

"Then," said Evander, calmly, "add to your letter my wish that Colonel Cromwell take no thought of me."

Brilliana stamped impatiently.

"I am not your secretary," she said, sharply.

"It does not matter," Evander answered, smoothly. "Colonel Cromwell will follow the laws of war."

"I am sorry for you if he do," Brilliana declared. "We shall test the strength of Colonel Cromwell's love." She called, loudly, "John Thoroughgood."

Thoroughgood advanced to her from where he stood removed.

"Ride with a white flag," Brilliana went on; "ride hard to my Lord Essex's army, wherever it may be. Where is my Lord Essex, Rufus?"

"They have retired, I think, upon Warwick," Rufus said, doubtfully.

"Well," Brilliana continued, "to the rebel army, wherever you can find it. Deliver this letter into the hands of Colonel Cromwell.

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Bring back his answer swiftly. Ride as if you were riding for your life."

Thoroughgood saluted, took the letter, and turned to go. Brilliana stopped him.

"First quarter Captain Cloud in the west room, and see him well tended."

Evander bowed.

"I thank you," he said, and followed Thoroughgood out of the room. Brilliana turned to Rufus.

"I trust you will all feast here to-night."

Rufus shook his head sadly.

"Tears in my eyes and heart, but not possible. We join the King to-night for Banbury." He came close to her and spoke low. "Bright Brilliana, will you not give me your golden promise ere I go?"

"You must not ask that yet," Brilliana pleaded. "I must know my own mind."

Sir Rufus banged his hands together.

"By God, I know mine, and my mind is to win you if I have to kill a regiment of rivals."

Brilliana pretended to shudder at his ferocity.

"Lord! you are a very violent lover."

Rufus did not deny her.

"I am a very earnest lover, a very desperate lover."

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Brilliana made a gesture of protest.

"Fie, this is no love-talk time, when the King is fighting. Ride, gallant Rufus, come back with loyal laurels and the flags of canting rebels, and see how I shall welcome you."

Rufus caught her hands.

"Must I be content with this?" he asked, hotly.

"You must be content with this," Brilliana replied, coolly. "Here come your brothers-in-arms."

The doors of the banqueting-hall opened, and Fawley, Radlett, Bardon, Ingrow, and Halfman came in, all brighter for wine and food.

"'Tis boot and saddle, Rufus," Fawley cried.

"I am yours," Rufus answered. He bowed over Brilliana's fingers. "Farewell, lady."

One and all they turned and left her, and as they tramped into the air the chorus of the Cavalier song came back to her happy ears.

"And we will sing, boys, God bless the King, boys,
Cast up your hats, and cry Vive le Roy."

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XIII

A GILDED CAGE

EVANDER awoke in a strange world steeped in lavender. It was long since he had lain so soft, long since he had drifted out of dreams to breathe lavender. His pleased senses, less alert for very ease and pleasure, denied him immediate knowledge of his whereabouts. He saw a fair room, well appointed; he welcomed the morning sunlight through delicate, unfamiliar curtains; he questioned the insisting deliciousness of lavender. Where was he? What was this chamber of calm panelled in pale oak? It was not Leyden, it was not Cambridge; then in a flash he knew. It was the west room at Harby—Harby where he lay a prisoner on parole, Harby which he had tried to take and which had ended by taking him. He leaped from his bed instantly, well awake, well alive, and gaining the window peeped through the parted curtains. He looked out across the moat on the terrace to the rear of Harby, beyond which lay the spacious gardens for which Harby was held

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famous. His men had held that terrace twenty-four hours earlier; now they had vanished as if they had never been, save for the testimony of the trampled grass. In their place a solitary figure sat on a baluster drinking smoke contemplatively from a pipe of clay. Evander knew him for Halfman—knew, too, that Halfman watched there for him, for the moment the curtains parted the sitter rose and, advancing towards the edge of the moat, waved and voiced salutation to Evander.

"Give you good-morning, gallant capitano," he called. "Jocund day stands on the top of yon high eastern hill. Will it please your worthiness to be stirring?"

"Very willingly," Evander called back. "Have I overslept?"

Halfman made a gesture of protestation.

"Nay, nay," he answered. "Your time is your own nag here, to amble, pad, or gallop as you choose. Have I your permission to wait upon you in your apartment?"

On Evander's assurances that nothing would afford him greater pleasure, Halfman favored him with a military salute, and, crossing the moat by the now restored bridge, disappeared inside the house. Evander hastened to clothe himself, a task which he had but partially accom-

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plished when the drumming of a pair of hands upon the door informed him that his custodian waited at the threshold. He opened the door, and Halfman walked in wearing for the occasion a manner in which good-fellowship and condescension, with the consideration of a noble victor for a noble vanquished, were artfully blended and emphatically interpreted. He held out his hand for Evander's and gave to it a martial pressure.

"A soldier should ever be abroad betimes," he asserted. "Wherefore I applaud your rising."

Evander inquired again, somewhat anxiously, if he had been expected to appear before, which again Halfman denied.

"Since you have passed your parole," he affirmed, "Harby Hall is Liberty Hall for you as far as to the park limits. I would have battered at your door ere this, but I respected your first sleep in a strange bed, wherein often a bad night makes a late matins. Can you break your fast?"

Evander answering that he could, Halfman called upon him to follow, and led the way into an adjoining room, which was, so he assured Evander, set at his disposal during the period of his stay. The room, like the bedchamber,

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was panelled of oak, was handsomely furnished, and its long windows, which occupied almost the entirety of one wall, afforded the same view of terrace and garden that Evander had already seen. Much had been newly done, so Evander could see, to brighten and cheer the place. A bowl of royal roses stood on the buffet, and Evander smiled at the delicate defiance. In the alcove of the window-seat a number of books were piled, books that had patently been newly dusted, and Evander, glancing at these, found that they were all theological, an attention which made him smile. A table decked with lily-white linen and silver furniture bore preparations for a meal.

"Here, sir," said Halfman, cheerfully, "for some few hours of flying time, you are, in a word, king of the castle. These rooms are yours to eat in, read in, pray in, sleep in—what you please. None shall disturb your privacy without your leave."

Evander guessed that his hostess had found this way of treating him well and yet keeping her from his presence. There was bitterness in the thought that she must needs hate him so deeply. It may be that something of the bitterness of the thought asserted itself on Evander's face, and that Halfman misread

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it thinking he read the prisoner's thoughts clearly.

"Do not think," he proceeded, "that you are cabined and cribbed to these walls. All Harby Park is your pleasant paradise when you are pleased to walk abroad, and after you have broken your fast I shall be pleased to guide you through its glories. And now, will you that I eat with you? I have kept myself fasting, or wellnigh fasting, till now, but if you would rather break your bread in solitude say, without offence given, what I shall hear without offence taken."

Evander assured his companion that he desired his company of all things. Indeed, had Halfman been other than he was, Evander would have preferred any companionship that kept him from his melancholy thoughts. And already Halfman attracted him, or at least interested him. His fantastical manner, his fluent speech, his assurance, and that note of something foreign, odd, as characteristic, as conclusive, as the scorch of foreign suns upon his face, appealed to the curiosity in Evander which ever made men books for him. Halfman's manner grew more expansive at Evander's ready acceptance of his offer. He was now the magnificent host, soldier still, but soldier at his ease,

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and he played at Lord of Harby with enthusiasm.

"You are in the right," he said. "It is ill for man to sit alone at meat, for it encourages whimsical humors and the mounting of crudities to the brain. A flagon is twice a flagon that is shared by camerados, and who can praise a pasty to himself with only dumb walls to echo his plaudits? And here in good time come flagon and pasty, both."

The door had opened as he spoke, and Mistress Satchell came into the room, followed by a brace of serving-men who bore on trays the materials for an ample repast. Halfman eyed the viands with approval, while Evander returned gravely Mrs. Satchell's florid bobs and greetings.

"I saw to it last night," he went on, "that Harby was revictualled. You pinched us, sir, you pared us; our larder was as lean as a stork's leg, but to-day we can eat our fill."

And, indeed, the table now being spread by Mrs. Satchell's directions bore out the assertion of Halfman. Jolly, white loaves, a grinning boar's head, a pasty with a golden dome, a ham the color of a pink flower, and a dish of cold game tempted hunger where flagons of white wine and red wine tempted thirst. Halfman

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dismissed Mrs. Satchell and her satellites affably.

"We can wait upon ourselves," he averred. "We shall be more private so," and he motioned Evander to a seat and took his own place opposite. "Yes," he said, resuming the thread of his thought, as he piled a plate for Evander, "you did your best to starve us; we must not do the like by you."

Evander smiled as he stayed the generosity of his host's hands and accepted from his reluctance a plate less lavishly charged with viands than Halfman had proposed to offer him.

"Yet," he said, "I think I heard, no later ago than yesterday, much clatter of dishes and much rattling of cups and all the sounds of plenty."

Halfman hurriedly bolted a goodly slice of ham lest it should choke him while he laughed, which he now did heartily, lolling back in his chair. He was honestly amused, and yet it seemed to Evander as if there were something in his strange friend's mirth which was carefully calculated to produce its effect. Indeed, Halfman, as he laughed, was thinking of Sir John Falstaff's full-bodied thunders over some ticklish misdoings of Bardolph or Nym. When

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he had enough of his own performance, he allowed the laughter to die as suddenly as it had dawned, and gave tongue.

"That was the best jest in the world," he chuckled. "Clatter of dishes, say you, and rattle of cups. Once, when I was in Aleppo, I heard an old fellow in an Abraham beard telling a tale to a crowd of Moors. I had not enough of their lingo to know why they laughed, but one who was with me that had more Moorish told me the tale. It was of one who invited a poor man to his house and pretended to feed him nobly, naming this fair dish and that fine wine, and pressing meat and drink upon him, while all the while, in very mockery, there was neither bite in any platter nor sup in any bottle. Well, excellent sir, our table of yesterday was in some such case."

Evander nodded. "I guessed as much," he commented. "But, indeed, it was bravely done."

"It was bravely devised," Halfman asserted. "It was my lady's thought. She would never let a rascally Roundhead—I crave your pardon, she would never let an enemy—dream that we were in lack of aught at Harby that could help us to serve the King."

"Your lady is a very brave lady," Evander

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said, quietly. Halfman caught at his words with a kind of cheer in his voice.

"Hippolyta was not more valiant, nor Parthian Candace, nor French Joan. She is the rose of the world, the fairest fair, the valiantest valor. There is no wine in the world that is worthy to pledge her, but we must do our best with what we have."

He filled himself a spacious tankard as he spoke and drained it at a draught. Evander listened to his ebullient praises in silence. He did not think that the Lady of Harby should be so spoken of and by such an one. Over-eating and especially over-drinking were ever distasteful to him, and he took it that Halfman was on the high-road to becoming drunk. But in this he was wrong. When Halfman set down his vessel he was as sober as when he had lifted it, but of a sudden a shade graver, as if Evander's silence had shadowed his boisterous gayety. He pushed the beaker from him with a sigh, and then, seeing that Evander's plate was empty, offered to ply him with more food. On Evander's refusal he pushed back his chair. "Well," he said, "if your stomach is stayed, are you for a stroll in the gardens—will you see lawns and parks of fairyland?"

Evander willingly acquiesced, and the strange-

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ly assorted pair rose and quitted the chamber. They met Mistress Satchell on the threshold, and Tiffany hiding slyly behind her highness. Evander smilingly complimented Mistress Satchell on the excellence of her table, to the good dame's great gratification. But much to Tiffany's indignation he paid little heed to her pretty face.

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XIV

A PASSAGE AT ARMS

THE vane of Halfman's attitude towards the captive had veered strongly in the past half-hour. He had been ready to treat him well, for such was Brilliana's pleasure; he was willing to make friends and taste the agreeables of the magnanimous victor. But the conquered man had gained no ground that morning in the heart of one of his conquerors. He ate little, which Halfman pitied; he drank little, which Halfman despised; and it was with a much-augmented disdain that he beheld Evander dash his solitary cup with water.

"Craftily qualified, curse him," he thought; "the fellow's a damned Cassio, and will be fumbling with his right hand and his left in a twinkle."

In this he was disappointed; Evander's draught wrought no havoc in his speech or demeanor; Halfman was more disappointed that the prisoner took so coldly his laudations of his lady.

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"The Roundpoll is so mad to be mastered by a woman that he has not enough gentility in his thin wits to spur him to a compliment."

His hostile thoughts brewed in his heated brain-pan till their fumes fevered him. As he led the way by stair and corridor, his mood for quarrel grew the keener that he knew his choler could find no hope of ventage with a prisoner committed to his care. And even as he thought this, chance seemed to furnish him with some occasion for satisfaction. They were passing by the open door of a room which had long been used as a place of arms at Harby, and its walls were hung with weapons of the time and weapons of an earlier generation. Half-man had passed much time there with the brisker fellows of the garrison, breaking them in to feats of weapon-play, and he smiled at the memory and the magnitude of his own dexterity. He paused for a moment at the threshold and looked round at Evander.

"Here," he said, with a smile that was half a leer and an intonation that was little less than a sneer—"here is a spot that will scarce have enough attraction for your worship to merit your worship's stay."

Evander, who had been following his guide almost mechanically, enveloped in his own gray

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reflections, took surprised note of his companion's changed bearing. Up to now he had been civil enough, even if his civility had not been of a quality greatly to Evander's liking, yet now his blustering good-humor gave place to something akin to deliberate offence. But he might be mistaken, and it was not for a prisoner to snatch at straws of quarrel. Therefore he protested, courteously:

"Why should you think that a soldier takes no interest in a soldier's tools?"

Halfman gave a shrug to his shoulders that might or might not be intended to annoy.

"Your worship is too raw a soldier to know much of these same tickers and tappers. Let us rather to the library for volumes of divinity."

This time the intention to affront was so patent, so patent, too, that Halfman's temper was getting the better of whatever discretion he possessed, that Evander's face hardened, and yet for his own reasons he still spoke mildly enough:

"There is no need to call me worship, for I can claim no such title. But I think I know something of these trinkets, and with your leave will examine them."

He passed by Halfman as he spoke and entered the room, where he immediately busied

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himself in the examination of some of the weapons displayed there, and apparently ignoring Halfman's existence. Halfman watched him with a scowl for a moment and then followed him into the room.

"Your honor," he said—"since you will not be called worship—your honor really has a use for these toys of gentlefolk?"

Evander had taken a handsome Italian rapier from its case against the wall, and, after glancing at its blade, was weighing and testing the weapon in the air. As he gave Halfman no answer, the latter took up the talk again, provocatively:

"I cannot deny that your honor showed fight briskly enough yester evening, but then it seemed little less than fight or die, and even a rat, if you corner him, will snap for dear life. Moreover, you were well ambushed, and there was a gentle lady present who would not see a rat butchered unnecessarily."

Evander, still weighing the fine Italian blade, turned to Halfman and addressed him with an exasperating composure.

"Friend," he said, "I have told you that I am not unacquainted with arms. When I am a free man I enforce belief in my word. As it is—"

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He left his sentence uncompleted, and with a contemptuous shrug of his shoulders proceeded on his journey round the room, still carrying the Italian rapier in his hand. Under his tan Halfman's face blazed and his eyes glittered, but he spoke with a forced calm and a feigned civility:

"Say you so much? Why, I believe your honor, surely. Yet, as they say, seeing is believing, and if you are in the vein for a gentle and joyous passage with buttoned arms, I that am here to entertain your honor would not for the world's width gainsay you."

Evander eyed him quietly. "Are you ready at fence?" he inquired. "I shall be pleased to take a lesson from you."

Halfman's heart warmed at his words. "The coney creeps towards the gin," he thought, exultantly; then he answered, aloud:

"Why, if you have a stomach for it you shall not be crossed. Here be two buttoned rapiers, true twins — length, weight, workmanship. I will beleather them in a twink. I promise you I would not hurt your honor."

"You are very good," Evander answered, gravely. Halfman was already busy tying two large pads of leather the size of small oranges onto the buttoned blades. While he was at

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work Evander occupied himself with the contents of the room until Halfman, having finished his job, advanced towards him with the weapons extended. Suddenly he paused.

"Stop!" he said. "Let us make a wager on our game. I always play with more heart so. Here is my stake."

He began to fumble at his doublet, and presently produced from an inner pocket a great thumb-ring with a ruby in it.

"I gained that," he said, "at the sacking of a Spanish town. 'Tis worth a pope's ransom. Set what you please against it."

Evander lifted the ring from the table where Halfman placed it and took it to the window to look at it closely. Presently he laid it on the table again.

"It is a goodly ring," he observed. "The setting is old and curious, and the stone, though it has a slight flaw in it, as you have been doubtless told before now, is worth more than any poor possessions I have about my person. Wherefore I would rather we contended for love."

Halfman shook his head. He was a thought dashed by Evander's discovery of the blemish in the stone, and he carried off his discomfiture by bravado

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"Nay, nay," he answered; "there is my stake. Set what you please against it, were it no more than a silver groat. I do not ask to be paid well for my lesson."

Evander said nothing, but drew his purse from his pocket and laid it on the table. Through the meshes Halfman could see the gleam of a few pieces of gold, and the gleam cheered him, as it always did. He was ever greedy of gold, and thought the death of Crassus not unkingly.

"Choose your blade," he said. Evander, with a quick glance at the two weapons, selected the one nearest to him, flung his hat onto a chair, stripped off his doublet, and quietly waited for his adversary. Halfman did not keep him long. He flung his hat and doublet on the floor and advanced.

"Are you ready?" he asked. Evander saluted in silence, and in another moment the antagonists engaged and the mock duello began. Halfman expected that it would be short, but it proved much shorter than he expected. He was far too good a swordsman not to know when he had encountered a better. The thing had not happened to him very often; it happened very flagrantly now. In less than five minutes Evander had placed the muffled button of his

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blade three times on Halfman's person—once upon either breast, and the third time fair on the forehead, just between the eyes. The last blow was so surely delivered that had it been given with greater force it might have knocked the receiver senseless. As it was, however, it was given with such deliberate delicacy that, though Halfman's head hummed for the moment and his eyes saw stars, he rallied quickly enough to stare at Evander where he stood with lowered point and to tender him a salutation of honest admiration.

"Great Jove of glory!" he gasped; "who was it that ran liquid steel into your spare body?"

Evander smiled at the new change in his chameleon companion.

"I learned a little fencing when I was in Paris," he admitted. "I fear I was overinclined for the pastime."

"A little fencing!" Halfman ejaculated. "A little fencing! Why, man, that botte between the eyes would have done for me, even if you had not spitted both my lungs first. No one can ever say of you that you held your sword like a dancer. Give me your hand—by God! I must grip your hand."

"Sir," said Evander, as the pair clasped hands with the hearty clasp of true combatants,

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"you overpraise me; yet for your friendly praises I have a favor to ask of you."

"Name it and it is done," Halfman asseverated, with an oath, "were it to pluck a purple hair for you from the beard of the Grand Cham himself."

"'Tis no such matter," Evander answered. "I do but entreat you of your courtesy to take back your ring, for which in very truth I have no use."

Halfman protested a little for form's sake, then gave way, glad enough to pouch his jewel again.

"You are a gentleman," he declared. "Come, let us taste the air in the gardens."

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XV

MY LADY'S PLEASAUNCE

THE gardens of Harby were captain jewels in the crown of Oxfordshire. From the terrace they spread in spaces of changeful beauty over many acres of fruitful earth. Evander had seen to it that no further harm was done to these lovely spaces than was inevitable for the conduct of the siege. There were some in his company hissing hot zealots, who were all for laying violating hands upon the temples of Baal and the shrines of Ashtaroth, by which Evander rightly interpreted them to mean the pleasaunces of clipped yews, the rose bowers, the box hedges, and the generous autumnal orchards. They were eager to show their scorn of the Amalekites by the lopping of ancient trees and the treading of colored blossoms under the heel of Israel. But Evander was as firm as these were frantic, and the gardens of Harby smiled through familiar process of sun and rain and dew, untroubled by the daily rattle of musketry and the nightly tramp of sentinels.

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Evander reaped a reward for which he had not labored in his chivalry to a belligerent and besieged lady. For the gardens that a conqueror had preserved were now very fair indeed for a conquered man to walk in. The October sun shone as if the royal triumph, yonder at Edgehill and here at Harby, had rekindled summer on the chilling altar of the year, and the hues of the lingering flowers flamed in the celestial fires.

If Evander's thoughts were sable, he did not allow them to stain the fair day and his companion's gayety. Halfman swam now in the extravagance of admiration for so miraculous a Puritan. Halfman loved the apostles best on spoons of silver in a sea-bag swollen with loot, but of the men he had the best word for Peter, who could use a sword on occasion. And here was one of the saints on earth playing his rapier as bravely as if he had been a gentleman born or gentleman adventurer made, and had skimmed the seas and kissed and killed and pilfered.

He plied Evander, as they paced, with questions of swordsmanship and schools of arms and masters, of the Italian method and the Spanish method and the French method, and never caught his new Hector tripping over a push or a

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parade. They moved over danceable lawns or under the canopies of dim avenues, chattering of arms, till the soft October air tingled with the names of famous fencers, and Halfman was in fancy a lubber lad again at his first passado.

But his wonder grew with their wanderings. They paused at the bowling-green and played a game which Evander won. They visited the stables where the horses now were rallied, that had lived hidden in farm-yard and cottage garden during the siege. Here Halfman learned that Evander liked hawks and loved horses, and knew their manage better than himself. Had Evander proclaimed himself a whisperer, it would not now have astonished Halfman.

Again, as they passed by the orchard where Luke Gardener was busy, Halfman must needs bring Luke and Evander acquainted, whereupon the pair set straight to talking of garden talk and airing of weather wisdom in speech long since to him as unfamiliar as Hebrew. Here Evander's science wearied him, and he fairly dragged his captive away, declaring that there was yet much to see more honorable than herbs or brambles. Evander obeyed very contentedly, but they had not moved many paces when Luke came hobbling after, and, catching Halfman, drew him by the arm apart.

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"Is yonder truly a damnable Roundhead?" he questioned. Halfman nodded his head.

"Well," continued Luke, "for that he deserves to be hanged, and yet he has taught me a trick of grafting roses which he says the Dutch use that might serve to save a worser man from the gallows."

Without a word Halfman shook his arm free and rejoined Evander, who was moving slowly along a pathway leading towards an enclosure of fantastically clipped yews. Hearing the footsteps behind him, Evander halted till Halfman joined him.

"How the devil came you to fathom flower knowledge?" Halfman asked. Evander smiled faintly.

"I would rather you unsaddled the devil from your question," he answered, rebuking in his mind a woman; "but I have always loved gardens. You have one here who is skilled in topiary," and he pointed towards the trim yew hedge they were approaching.

"Those are the green walls of my lady's pleasaunce," Halfman answered, "and the learned in such trifles call them mighty fine. But all I know of woodcraft is hatcheting me a path through virgin forest."

"Where, indeed, your topiarist would be ill

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at ease," Evander answered. "But I pray you let us retire, lest we intrude upon your lady."

"Never fear for that," said Halfman. "My lady is busy enough in-doors to-day, setting her house to rights, and you should not miss the comeliest nook in all the domain."

As he spoke he passed under an archway of clipped yew, and, Evander following, the pair came upon a grassy space entirely girdled with yew hedges, the sight of which instantly justified to Evander the praise of his companion. The enclosure made a circle some half an acre in size of the greenest turf imaginable, orderly bordered with seats of white marble and belted all about with the black greenness of the yew-tree hedge, which was fashioned like an Italian colonnade. The arches afforded vistas of different and delightful prospects of the park at every quarter of the card—woodland, savanna-like lawns, flower-gardens, kitchen-gardens, and orchards in their pride.

"This is a lovely place," protested Evander. "One might sit here and dream of seeing the shy wood-nymphs flitting through these aisles—if one had no better thoughts for one's idleness," he added. Halfman laughed.

"There peeped out the Puritan," he said. "I had lost him this long while, but run him to

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earth in my lady's pleasaunce. Yet you are a queer kind of Puritan, too. You can fence like a Frenchman, you can play bowls as Father Jove plays with the globes of heaven, and you can ride like Diomed, the jolly Greek, who knew that horses could be stridden as well as driven."

Evander, who had seated himself and had been tracing cabalistic signs on the grass with his staff, looked up into his companion's face.

"Are not you rather a queer kind of Cavalier," he asked, "if you think that a Puritan must needs be a fool?"

Halfman laughed back at him, and as he laughed he showed his teeth so seeming white by contrast with his sunburned cheeks, and he seemed to Evander more than ever like some half-tamed beast of prey.

"You are no fool, Puritan," Halfman shouted, "or Heaven would not have wasted its time in gracing you with such skill at sports. So great with the rapier, so wise on the bias. No, no; you are no fool. I am almost sad to think you quit us so soon, enemy though you be."

While Halfman had been babbling, Evander had again been busy with his staff. Halfman had paid no heed to his actions, being far too deep in his own phrases. Had he been attentive he might have noticed that at first Evander

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wrote on the green grass, as vainly as he might have written in water, a word, a name: Brilliana. Had he been attentive he might have noticed that Evander now wrote another word that was also a name and more than a name: Death. But he did not notice, and as he ended with his odd tribute to his enemy, Evander looked up at him with a calm face.

"I shall not quit you so soon," he said, in an even voice. "I have come to stay at Harby."

Halfman looked at him, puzzled.

"Stay at Harby," he repeated. "Nonsense, man; what are you thinking of? You will be riding hence in three days' time, when Sir Randolph is released."

Evander shook his head.

"Sir Randolph will not be released," he said. The quiet positiveness in his tone staggered Halfman. Stooping, with his hands resting on his knees, his unquiet eyes stared into Evander's quiet eyes.

"Sir Randolph will not be released! Why the devil will Sir Randolph not be released?"

Evander rose from his seat and rested his hand for a moment lightly on Halfman's arm, while he said, impressively:

"Say nothing of this to your lady, for Sir Randolph is her kinsman, and I think she holds

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him dear. Let ill news come late. But if Colonel Cromwell has taken a spy prisoner, that spy will very surely die."

Halfman stiffened himself. His eyes had never left Evander's, and he knew that Evander spoke what he believed. He gave a short laugh.

"And very surely if Sir Randolph be shot over yonder you will be shot down here."

"That," said Evander, still smiling, "is why I say that I have come to stay at Harby."

"You take your fate blithely," Halfman commented, scanning Evander with curiosity. He was familiar with the sight of men in peril of death; in most men he took courage for granted, but it was courage of a gaudier quality than the composure of the young Puritan, who had fenced with him and played bowls with him that very morning and talked so learnedly of roses with Luke, the gardener. Was there really something in the Puritan stuff that strengthened men's spirits? Evander answered his words and unconsciously his thoughts.

"I should not have taken up arms if I held my life too precious. It will need three days to get the answer, the inevitable answer, and in the mean time the autumn air is kind and these gardens delightful."

Halfman stared at him in an ecstasy of ad-

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miration, and then dealt him an applauding clap on the shoulder.

"Come to the kitchen-garden, philosopher," he cried. "A fellow of your phlegm should find pleasure in the contemplation of cabbages."

"It is a sage vegetable," Evander answered. "But I fear I tax your time. There must be much for you to do."

"I have done much already," Halfman replied. "But, indeed, these be busy times."

"Then," protested Evander, "when I have stared my fill at your meditative cabbage I shall entreat no more of your kindness but that you convoy me to the safe port of the library, where I shall be content enough."

"As you please," Halfman responded. "I was never a bookish man; I care for no books but play-books and these I carry here," and he beat his brown forehead. "But you may nose out some theologies in odd corners, as a pig noses truffles."

"I shall rout out something to fill my leisure I doubt not," Evander answered.

"Then hey for the kitchen-garden," cried Halfman, taking Evander's arm, and the two men, passing through a yew arch opposite to that by which they had entered, left my lady's pleasaunce as solitary as they had found it.

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XVI

A PURITAN APPRAISED

It did not remain solitary long. Unawares, the steps of Halfman and Evander had been dogged ever since they crossed the moat and set out on their pilgrimage through the gardens. Crouching behind hedges, lingering in coppices, peeping through thickets, two persistent trackers had pursued the unconscious quarry. Scarcely had the shadows of Evander and his companion vanished from the grasses of the pleasaunce than the pursuers emerged from the shelter of a yew screen and ran into the open, staring after the departing pair. Yet these pursuers were no stealthy enemies, but merely creatures spurred by an irresistible curiosity. One was stout and red faced and inclined to breathe hard after the fatigues of the chase. The other was slim and smooth, with ripe cheeks and bright eyes, lodgings for the insolence of youth. In a word, the hunters were Mistress Satchell and pretty Tiffany, who had found their Puritan prisoner and visitor a being of considerable interest.

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Mistress Satchell turned a damp, shining face and a questioning eye upon Tiffany.

"Is not he a dashing lad for a Puritan?" she gasped, patting her ample chest with both hands as if to fondle her newly recovered breath. Tiffany, who was bearing her mistress's lute, shrugged and pouted.

"I see little to like in him," she snapped. This was not at all true, but she was not going to admit as much to Mistress Satchell, or, for that matter, to herself. Mistress Satchell snorted fiercely, like an offended war-horse.

"Because he has not clipped you round the waist, pinched you in the cheek, kissed you on the lips—such liberties as our rufflers use. But he is a man for my money."

She spoke with vehemence. Pretty Tiffany made a dainty grimace as she answered:

"I think I am pleasing enough to behold, yet he gave me no more than a glance when he gave me good-day."

Mistress Satchell's ample bulk swayed with indignation.

"He is a lad of taste, I tell you. Why should he waste his gaze on such small goods when there was nobler ware anigh? He smiled all over his face when he greeted me."

Tiffany was sorely tempted to smile all over

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her face as she listened, but Mistress Satchell's temper was short and her arm long, so she kept her countenance as she answered, shortly:

"He is little."

This Mistress Satchell swiftly countered with the affirmation:

"He is great."

Tiffany thrust again.

"He is naught."

Again Dame Satchell parried.

"He is much," she screamed, and her face was poppy-red with passion, but Tiffany, retreating warily and persistent to tease, was about to start some fresh disclaimer of the Puritan's merits when she caught sight through a yew arch vista of a gown of gold and gray, and her tongue faltered.

"Our lady," she whispered to Mistress Satchell, who had barely time to compose her ruffled countenance when Brilliana came through the yew arch and paused on the edge of the pleasaunce surveying the belligerents with an amused smile.

"What are you two brawling about?" she asked, as she moved slowly towards the marble seat. Tiffany thrust in the first word.

"Goody Satchell will vex me with praise of the Parliament man."

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By this time Brilliana had seated herself, observing her vehement shes with amusement. She turned a face of assumed gravity upon the elder.

"So, so, Mistress Satchell, have you turned Roundhead all of a sudden?"

Mrs. Satchell shook her head at Brilliana and her fist at Tiffany.

"Tiffany is a minx, but I am an honest woman; and as I am an honest woman, there are honest qualities in this honest Puritan."

Brilliana knew as much herself and fretted at the knowledge. It cut against the grain of her heart to admit that a rebel could have any redemption by gifts. But she still questioned Mistress Satchell smoothly, thinking the while of a man intrenched behind a table, one man against six.

"What are these marvels?" she asked.

Mistress Satchell was voluble of collected encomiums.

"Why, Thomas Coachman swears he is a master of horse-manage, and he has taught Luke Gardener a new method of grafting roses, and Simon Warrener swears he knows as much of hawking as any man in Oxford or Warwick."

She paused, out of breath. Brilliana, leaning

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forward with an air of infinite gravity, commented:

"It were more to your point, surely, if the gentleman had skill in cook-craft."

Mistress Satchell was not to be outdone; she clapped her hands together noisily and shrilled her triumph.

"There, too, he meets you. After breakfast this morning, when I asked him how he fared, he overpraised my table, and he gave me a recipe for grilling capons in the Spanish manner —well, you shall know, if you do but live long enough."

The ruddy dame nodded significantly as she closed thus cryptically her tables of praises. Brilliana uplifted her hands in a pretty air of wonder.

"The phœnix," she sighed, "the paragon, the nonpareil of the buttery." Instantly her smiling face grew grave.

"Well, it is not for us to praise him or blame him while he is on our hands. See that you give him good meals, Mistress Satchell."

Dame Satchell stared at her mistress in some amazement.

"Will he not dine in hall, my lady?"

Brilliana frowned now in good earnest.

"Lordamercy! do you think I would sit at

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meat with a rebel? Have I not set him a room apart, to spare myself the sight of him? Serve him in his own rooms, but look you serve him well."

Dame Satchell wagged her head with an air of the deepest significance.

"I warrant you," she muttered, "he commended my soused cucumbers."

And so nodding and chuckling she moved like a great galleon over the green, and soon was out of sight. The moment her broad back was well turned, Tiffany permitted herself to utter the protests which had been boiling within her.

"To listen to Dame Satchell, one would think that no man had ever seen a horse or known one dish from another before this."

Brilliana gave her handmaid a glance of something near akin to displeasure.

"I think you all talk and think too much of the gentleman. I see little to praise in him save a certain coolness in peril. Let us have no more of him. We must use him well, but he will soon be gone, and a good riddance. Is my lute tuned, Tiffany?"

Tiffany answered "Ay," and her lady took up the lute and picked at a tune, yawning. The world seemed to have grown very tedious

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all of a sudden, and it did not seem so pleasant as she deemed it would prove to sit again in the yew circle and sing. She began a song or two, to leave each unfinished with a yawn, and, because yawning is contagious, Tiffany yawned too, discreetly behind her fingers. It was while Tiffany looked away to conceal a vaster yawn than its fellows, too vast for masking with finger-tips, that she saw a soldierly figure coming across the garden towards the pleasaunce.

"My lady," she cried, turning to Brilliana, "here comes Captain Halfman. Let us ask him his mind as to the Parliament man."

Brilliana's face brightened. Here was company, and good company. She had believed him too busy to be seen so soon, for she had bade him see about raising a troop of volunteers in the village, and she turned round readily to greet her companion of the siege.

Through the yew portal Halfman came, gravity reigning in his eyes and slaking their wild fire. He saluted Brilliana with the deep reverence he always showed to his fair general. Brilliana turned to her adjutant eagerly:

"Master Halfman, Master Halfman," she cried, "how do you measure our rebel?"

Halfman's gravity lightened amazingly at the thought of his prisoner.

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"I take him," he answered, emphatically, "for as proper a fellow as ever I met in all my vagabond days. Barring his primness he would have proved a gallant"—he was going to say "pirate," but paused in time and said "seaman." "God pardon him for a Puritan," he went on, "for he has in him the making of a rare Cavalier."

Brilliana turned to Tiffany, whose cheeks were very red.

"Hang your head, child," she cried; "for you are outvoted in a parliament of praise. Beat a retreat, maid Tiffany."

The crimson Tiffany fled from the pleasaunce.

"Where is your prisoner?" Brilliana asked.

"I have envoyed him over park and garden," Halfman answered, "and brought him to port in the library."

"Alas! I pity him," sighed Brilliana; "it holds few books of divinity. But come, recruiting-sergeant, what of our volunteers?"

"So pleases you, my lady," Halfman said, "our troop is swelling fast, and the sooner we clap them into colored coats the better."

Brilliana's curls danced in denial.

"Alas! friend, I have sad news for you. Of cloth for coats I can indeed command a great plenty"—she paused doubtfully.

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"Why this is glad news, not sad news," Halfman said. "So may you serve it out with all despatch."

Brilliana dropped her hands to her sides and her lids over her eyes, a pretty picture of despair; but, "Alas! 'tis all white," she confessed—"wool white, snow white, ermine white. You must needs have patience, good recruiting-sergeant, till I can have it dyed the royal red."

Halfman pushed patience from him with outspread palms.

"Shall the King lack hands for lack of madder?" he questioned, with humorous indignation. "Not so, I pray you; let us cut our coats from your white cloth. I promise you we will dye it ourselves red enough in the blood of the enemy." Brilliana sprang to her feet rejoicing.

"Bravely said; so shall it be bravely done. I will give orders at once for the cutting and sewing. I will back our white coats against Master Hampden's green coats, or Essex's swarm in orange-tawny. Have you conveyed my message to my two miserly neighbors?"

"I sent Clupp to Master Hungerford," Halfman answered, "and Garlinge to Master Rainham, bidding them to your presence peremptory. But I warn you, my lady, from all I hear, that

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if you hope to raise coin for the King's cause from either of the skinflints you will be sadly at a loss."

"At least I must try," Brilliana declared. "Am I not the King's viceroy in Oxfordshire, and are not the two moneybags my proclaimed adorers? It will go hard with me but I compel them to swell the King's exchequer."

"You have done marvels," Halfman admitted. "Can you work miracles? With all due reverence, I doubt. But we shall soon see, for here comes Tiffany tiptoe through the trees. I'll wager it is to herald one of the vultures."

As he spoke, Tiffany tripped in pink and grinning.

"My lady," said she, "Master Paul Hungerford has ridden in and seeks audience."

Brilliana clapped her hands.

"Go, bring him in, Tiffany; and, Tiffany child, if Master Peter Rainham comes, as I shrewdly expect, keep him apart, on your life, till I know of his coming."

Tiffany vanished. Brilliana turned to Halfman.

"Stay with me, captain, and aid me to trap these badgers."

Halfman smiled delight. "I will help you

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extempore," he promised. "I will eke out my part with impromptus."

He stood a little apart, grim mirth in his eyes, as Tiffany ushered into the circle a lean, shabby country-gentleman, whose habit would have shamed a scarecrow. Tiffany disappeared and the new-comer made Brilliana an awkward bow. "Sweet lady, you sent for me and I come, love, quickly."

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XVII

SET A KNAVE TO CATCH A KNAVE

BRILLIANA had much ado to keep from laughing in the face of the uncouth genuflector, but she kept a grave face and uttered grave complaint.

"Master Hungerford! Master Hungerford! They tell me sad tales of you. Though you are as wealthy as wealthy you will not mend the King's exchequer."

Master Paul gave vent to such a wail as a dog makes when one treads unaware upon his tail, and clapped his hands about piteously.

"I wealthy! Forgive you, lady, for listening to such tales. I am not so graced. I am little bigger than a beggar."

Brilliana wagged her curls.

"Why, now, Master Hungerford, you have a great estate."

Master Hungerford's whine rose higher, and he paddled at the air as if he sought to come to some surface and breathe free.

"Great land, lady—great land, if you will, but

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little cash. My land holds every penny I get together. Why, 'tis well known in the country that I buy land for a thousand pound every year, wherefore I can never boast more than a guinea in ready money."

Brilliana frowned on the floundering squire.

"This is a sad business, Master Hungerford, for the King is in need and will oblige hereafter those that oblige him now. His Majesty has made me a kind of viceroy here in Oxford. I begin to think that you incline to the Parliament, Master Paul. If I thought that, I would hold you a traitor and make perquisitions at your place."

Master Hungerford groaned dismally:

"Lordamercy!" he moaned. "I am the loyalest knight in England. Nay, now, if you talk of perquisitions there is my neighbor Peter Rainham. I know him for a skinflint who will deny the King. Yet I know of a chest of his that is stuffed with gold pieces. Were he a true man he would shift his treasure into the King's sack, as I would if I had such a store."

A fantastic possibility danced into Brilliana's brain. She glanced to where Halfman stood moodily ruminating on the method he would employ to loosen Master Hungerford's purse-strings if he had him at his mercy in a taken

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town. Brilliana could not read his thoughts, which was as well, but she gave him a glance which stirred him to alertness as she resumed her interrogatory of her niggardly neighbor.

"Why, then, Master Hungerford, if he be as you say, he is little better, if better at all, than a Parliament man, and, therefore, our common enemy."

Master Paul rubbed his lean hands in delight.

"It is indeed as you say," he affirmed, with a sour smile that sat very vilely on his yellow face. Brilliana leaned forward, and, governing his shifty eyes, spoke very impressively.

"Now meseems you might win great credit in the King's eyes, at no cost to yourself, if you were to lay hands on this treasure in the King's name."

Master Paul's alarm asserted itself in a shriek.

"Lordamercy, lady, what of the law of the land? Would you have me turn footpad, house-breaker?"

His jaws shook, his joints twitched, he was abject in alarm. Springing to her feet, Brilliana spoke impatiently.

"A Parliament man is outside the King's law; his goods are forfeit, and to confiscate them as legal as loyal. I thought you might choose

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to serve the King and please me." This last was said with an accent of disdain which made the unhappy squire shiver. "I was in error, so no more words of it. Good-day to you."

And my Lady Brilliana made Master Paul a courtesy so contemptuous and a gesture of dismissal so decisive that Master Hungerford's terror deepened. If the King's cause were to go well, if the lady indeed had favor with his Majesty, to offend her would be verily a piece of mortal folly. He came nigh to falling on his knees as he pleaded.

"Nay, nay, never so hot, now; I am your suitor, in faith, I am your very good servant. I would serve your will in this if I could but march with the law."

Brilliana jumped at his concession. She saw Tiffany in the distance crossing the garden towards her and guessed that she came to announce the arrival of the other miser; so she was eager to clinch the business with Master Hungerford.

"Why, so you ever shall, with the King's law. What more easy? I represent the King in this district; this fellow is a suspected rebel; I give you leave to search his house for arms."

Master Paul pricked his ears. "Ah, so, for arms, you say?"

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Tiffany paused in the archway and jerked her thumb over her shoulder in the direction of the house. Brilliana shrugged her shoulders, impatient of Master Paul's denseness.

"If you find gold in your search for steel, so much the better. Come, come, this is your happy time, for I am told Master Rainham is abroad."

She gave a glance for confirmation at Halfman, who lounged forward.

"That he is," he asserted, briskly. "He has gone a-marketing."

"Then to it at once!" Brilliana cried, eying the waverer encouragingly. "Take such of my people as you will. You will find some at the stables yonder," and as she spoke she pointed in the direction opposite to the house. "Master Rainham's miserliness keeps but a small retinue. You will meet with no resistance. Go forth, my knight."

Master Paul almost skipped with delight and he cracked his fingers vigorously. He seemed even less pleasing merry than terrified.

"You call me your knight." He turned and took Halfman to witness. "She calls me her knight. I'll do it. I'll do it," he voiced, exultingly.

Brilliana, with strenuous self-restraint, seemed to applaud his antics.

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"Bravely said, Chivalry!" she cried. "Let it be done, and well done, ere dusk."

Master Paul quavered before her in an ecstasy of delighted obedience.

"I fly, enchantress — I fly!" he chirruped. Then, as he turned to go, another thought struck him, and he entreated, grotesquely languishing, "Prithee, your hand to kiss first."

Brilliana denied him affably.

"By-and-by, maybe, as the prize of your triumph. Farewell."

After sundry strange scrapings, Master Hungerford took his departure in the direction of the stables. As soon as his back was turned, Brilliana questioned her maid.

"Well, Tiffany, is it Master Rainham?"

"Ay, my lady," Tiffany answered, demurely. She knew there was some manner of mystification forward and yearned for the key to it. "He chafes in the music-chamber."

"Send him here top-speed," Brilliana commanded. With a whisk of flying skirts Tiffany scuttered back to the house, and Brilliana turned to Halfman, the laughter in her eyes seeking and finding the laughter in his.

"Well," she said, "our angling prospers blithely. We have tickled one fish. Now for the other chub."

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Halfman, who had been swaying with silent merriment ever since the departure of Master Paul, suddenly grew steady again and looked warnings.

"He asks for another kind of angling, as I gather," he suggested. Brilliana looked daintily wise.

"As I bait the hook I believe I will land him. It will be rare if I can make Paul rob Peter while Peter plunders Paul. How dare they be so close-fisted while the King's flag is flying and England's honor in peril!"

If she said this with any idea of palliating the possible lawlessness of her action in the eyes of her companion, she wasted her words. Halfman had not been so happy since his return to England, not even in the briskest days of the siege, as he was now in the staging of this lawless comedy. The old pirate jigged in him at this fair maid's strategy.

"By St. Nicholas," he swore, "they should be bled white for a brace of knaves! This, I take it, is your other honor-bankrupt atomy."

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XVIII

SERVING THE KING

It was indeed Master Peter Rainham whom Tiffany now brought into the presence of her mistress, and left there standing and staring. Master Peter, eyed and appraised by the searching scrutiny of Halfman, resolved himself into a thick-set, boorish fellow, whose flying forehead, little, angry eyes, and assertive, yellow teeth made him, to Halfman's mind, resemble nothing in the world so much as a boar's head on an ale-house sign. Yet the fellow stood his ground sturdily enough, and stared at Brilliana with no sense of distress at his dirty homespun or his dirty hands.

"You sent for me?" he challenged. "Have you changed your mood? I am ever of the same mind, and will wed when you will."

The wolf look leaped into Halfman's eyes, and the loutish squire's life was, all unawares, in the greatest peril it had ever fringed. But Brilliana, intent only on her purposes, beamed on her blunt suitor as if he had scattered flowers at her feet.

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"You are a wonderful wooer," she protested. "But whatever admiration of your person I may, without unbecoming effrontery, confess, I would have you to know, plain and square, from this moment, that I will hearken to none but a King's man."

The boor's little eyes glinted and the boor's rusty fingers rasped at his stubble chin as he answered emphatically:

"Then I am a King's man, root and branch."

But his face showed less loyal confidence at Brilliana's next words.

"Then you must know his Majesty is in straits for ready money. Will you, who are reputed rich, come to his aid with a round sum?"

Master Peter showed his teeth in a snarl and flung up his hands.

"Reputed rich! Oh, what a bitter thing is a bad reputation. I am Job-poor; both ends will not meet, I tell you. If I had for lending-money a guinea in one pocket, why, I should lend it to the other pocket."

"Why do you woo me if you be so poor?" Brilliana asked, with a fine show of heat, and Halfman nodded his head as much as to say, "Ay, ay, answer me that, if you can."

Master Peter strove to answer, lamely enough.

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"Poor in pennies, lady, poorer in shillings, poorest in guineas. I may own half the country-side and have no coin to clink against the other."

Brilliana scoffed at his protest.

"Why, 'tis not so long ago Master Paul Hungerford told me you were a very Crœsus."

Master Peter clinched and unclinched his horny hands as if he were coming to grips with his traducer.

"Master Hungerford told you that? I would I had my hands knotted about his lying throat. He that is as rich as a Jew, that has a treasure of gold plate in his sideboard that would keep the King in arms and men for a month of Sundays, he so to slander my poverty."

Brilliana heaved a sympathetic sigh.

"I fear he is but a bad man. Do you think he cherishes the King's cause?"

Master Peter flamed with virtuous indignation.

"He, the black heart! Never think it. He is a rank Parliament scoundrel and worships Mr. Pym."

"Is it so?" cried Brilliana. "A rebel, a renegade. Why, now, Master Rainham, I see a pretty piece of loyal work for you."

Master Peter glowered at her suspiciously.

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"Anything for you, anything for the King; except give what I have none of—money."

"In the King's name," said Brilliana, heroically, "go forth and ransack this rebellious gentleman's house for arms."

Master Peter snorted sceptically.

"Arms! I think he hath none but an old rusty fire-lock and a breast and back that have seen better days."

Brilliana beamed on him, a yielding sphinx.

"But then, supposing you should pick up some plate on the way, some gold plate by chance—"

Master Peter rubbed his grimy hands.

"Why, it were fine," he admitted, gleefully; then added, with cunning, "Are you sure he is a Roundhead?"

"I am very sure he is your enemy," Brilliana answered, sharply, "for he makes you his daily jape."

The ugly boar-head looked uglier as it growled:

"Does he, the dog! I'd jape him if I gad my two hands upon him."

"Why," Brilliana asserted, now in the full tide of make-believe, "if you are a King's man, he will be of the other side, he hates you so. I cannot think how you have earned his hatred, unless, indeed—" and she broke off sud-

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denly and looked aside. Halfman would have given a shilling for a lonely place to laugh his fill in.

"Well, madam, well?" Master Rainham questioned, eagerly.

Brilliana faltered her answer.

"—unless he believes you stand higher in the graces of a certain lady than he can ever hope to stand."

Master Rainham's smile gave Halfman the feel of goose-flesh. Brilliana's face was, happily, averted.

"Madam, assure me 'tis so," grunted boar's-head.

"I must not say much," Brilliana protested, "no more than this, that in this enterprise, if you but achieve it, you will win great credit with the King at no cost to yourself, you spoil a rival, and—but this is very private—you will give great pleasure to that same nameless lady."

Master Peter shouted, "Why, then, all's well. I will pick him as clean as a whistle." Again caution overcrowded cheer. "But I must pick my time, look you."

On this, Brilliana became emphatic.

"No time like the present. It is to my certain knowledge that Master Paul is away from

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home to-day." Again she looked to Halfman for support, and again Halfman yielded it blithely.

"Ay, he has gone hawking," he declared; "he will not be home this great while."

Halfman's confirmation decided Master Peter.

"Why, I go at once. When the cat's away—! I will be back within the hour."

"Then," said Brilliana, "pray you go to the house and gather in my name from the servants' hall such men as you may need for your enterprise. Use despatch, for indeed I long for your return."

Master Peter paid her what he believed to be a courtly bow.

"That same nameless lady shall praise me," he chuckled, and, turning, made for the house with all speed. When they were alone, Brilliana and Halfman looked at each other with the mirth of children who have successfully raided an orchard.

"I have netted them," Brilliana said. "If it do but happen pat, we shall have served the King and punished two cozening faint-hearts. For the best of it is that neither can complain. Each is neck-high in the mire of lies, each has plundered the other, and must be dumb for shame of his knavery."

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"It will be brave to spy their faces," Halfman commented, "when they smell out the snare."

"Look to it," Brilliana suggested, "that they be kept apart when they come here. The jest must not spoil. How these old hawks will fly at each other when we unhood them."

"Trust me, lady," said Halfman. "I have been a play-actor and know how to stage a pair of gabies to the show."

He saluted her and made to depart. She had learned to like his company through the long days of siege, and this dull day of quiet she felt lonely. Moreover, she was grateful to him for having helped her so well in her plot against the niggards.

"Come again when you have taken order for this," she said. "There is still much to do, much to think for."

The man saluted anew, intoxicated with pleasure. He knew that she liked his company, and whatever was well in him burgeoned at the knowledge. His play-actor passion had bettered him, if it had not accomplished the impossible and transmuted the pirate of body into the pure of soul. It would not be true to say that he never thought lewdly of her; he

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would have thought lewdly of an angel or a vestal maid; that was ingrain in the composition of the man; but he thought well of her as he had never thought well of women before since he first scorched his stripling's fingers, and he would have killed twenty men to keep her from hearing a foul word. Sometimes when he talked with her, ever in his chastened part of the rough old soldier, he laughed in his sleeve at the difference between part and true man. The nut-hook humor of it was that both were realities, or, perhaps, that neither were realities.

As he quitted the pleasaunce he countered Mistress Tiffany, and saw at a distance, standing by the laurels, a foppish, many-colored, portly personage negligently twirling a long staff. Halfman guessed the name, grinned, and went on his business. Tiffany burst wellnigh breathless into her lady's presence.

"My lady," she gasped, "here is Sir Blaise Mickleton, who entreats the honor to speak with you."

Brilliana's face darkened for a moment, for she bore no kindness just then to the laggard in war. Then her face cleared again.

"Admit him," she said. "He will divert me for want of a better."

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Back ran Tiffany to where the visitor lingered, bade him enter the pleasaunce, where he would find her mistress, and having delivered her errand, ran again to the house, leaving him to his adventure.

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XIX

SIR BLAISE PAYS HIS RESPECTS

SIR BLAISE MICKLETON was, in his own eyes and in the eyes of the village girls of Harby, a vastly fine gentleman. If they had ever heard of the sun-god, Phœbus Apollo would have presented himself to their rusticity in some such guise as the personality of the local knight. Sir Blaise had been to London — once — had kissed the King's hand at Whitehall, and had ever since striven vehemently to be more Londonish than the Londoner. He talked with what he thought to be the town's drawl; he walked, as he believed, with the town walk over the grasses of his grounds and on the Harby high-roads. He plagued the village tailor with strange devices for coats and cloaks; many-colored as a Joseph, he strutted through bucolic surroundings as if he carried the top-knot of the mode in the Mall; he glittered in ribbons and trinkets, floundered rather than swam in a sea of essences, yet scarcely succeeded in amending, with all this false foppishness, the something

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bumpkin that was at the root of his nature. He was of a lusty natural with the sanguine disposition, and held himself as much above the most of his neighbors as he knew himself to be below the house of Harby. He was no double-face, friendly with both sides; he was rather for peeping from behind the parted doors of the temple of peace upon a warring world without, and making fast friends with the victor. He had very little doubt that the victor would be the King, but just enough doubt to permit his surrender to a distemper that kept him to his bed till Edgehill proved the amazing remedy.

Sir Blaise peacocked over the lawn, delicate as Agag. He murdered the morning air with odors, his raiment outglowed the rainbow; one hand dandled his staff, the other caressed his mustaches. He strove to smile adoration on Brilliana, but mistrust marred his ogle, and a shiver of fear betrayed his simper of confidence. Brilliana watched him gravely with never a word or a sign, and her silence intensified his discomfiture by the square of the distance he had yet to traverse.

"Coxcomb," she thought, and "coward," she thought, and "cur," she thought.

He could not read her thought, but he could read her tightened lips and her hostile eyes, and

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he wished himself again in bed at Mickleton. But it was too late to retreat, and he advanced in bad order under the silent fire of her disdain till he paused at what he deemed to be the proper place for ceremonious salutation. He uncovered, describing so magnificent a sweep of extended hat that its plumes brushed the grasses at her feet. He bowed so low that his pink face disappeared from view in the forward fall of his lovelocks. When the rising inflection shook these back and the pink face again confronted her, he seemed to have recovered some measure of assertion.

"Lady," he said, sighingly, "I kiss your mellifluous fingers and believe myself in Elysium."

The languishing glance that accompanied these languishing syllables had no immediate effect upon the lady to whom they were addressed. Still Brilliana looked fixedly at her visitor, and still Sir Blaise found little ease under her steady gaze. He blinked uncomfortably; his fingers twitched; he tried to moisten his dry lips. At length, out of what seemed a wellnigh ageless silence, the lady spoke, and her words were an arraignment.

"Why did you not come to Harby when Harby needed help?"

Sir Blaise felt weak in the knees, weak in the

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back, weak in the wits; he would have given much for a seat, more for a sup of brandy. But he had to speak, and did so after such gasping and stammering as spoiled his false bravado.

"I came to speak of that," he protested, forcing a jauntiness that he was far from feeling. "I feared you might misunderstand—"

"Indeed," interrupted Brilliana, "I think there is no misunderstanding."

Sir Blaise made an appealing gesture.

"Hear me out," he pleaded. "Hear me and pity me. The news of his Majesty's quarrel with his Parliament threw me into such a distemper as hath kept me to my bed these three weeks. My people held all news from me for my life's sake. It was but this morning I was judged sound enough to hear of all that has passed. How otherwise should I not have flown to your succor? I could wish your siege had lasted a while longer to give me the glory of delivering you."

The sternness faded from Brilliana's gaze. She was not really angry with this overcareful gentleman; she would only have been grieved had he proved the man to serve her well. He was no more for such enterprises than your lap-dog for bull-baiting. Ridiculous in his finery, pitiful in his subterfuge, he was only a thing to

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smile at, to trifle with. So she smiled, and, rising, swept him a splendid reverence.

"I am your gallantry's very grateful servant," she whispered, having much ado to keep from laughing in his face. The fatuous are easily pacified.

"I hope you do not doubt my valor?" he asked, with some show of reassurance.

"Indeed I have no doubt," Brilliana answered, with another courtesy. The speech might have two meanings. Sir Blaise, unwilling to split hairs, took it as balsam, and hurriedly turned the conversation.

"Well! well!" he hummed. "You seem nothing the worse for your business."

"I am something the better," she said, softly. Perhaps Sir Blaise did not hear her.

"Is it true," he asked, "that you harbor a Crop-ear in this house?"

"Indeed," Brilliana confirmed, "I hold him as hostage for the life of Cousin Randolph. You know that he is a prisoner?"

"I heard that news with the rest of the budget," Sir Blaise answered. "And what kind of a creature is your captive? Does he deafen you with psalms, does he plague you with exhortations?"

Brilliana laughed merrily.

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"No, no; 'tis a most wonderful wild-fowl. My people swear he is mettled in all gentle arts, from the manage of horses to the casting of a falcon."

Sir Blaise shook his staff in protest of indignation.

"Is it possible that such a rascal usurps the privileges of gentlefolk?"

"He carries himself like a gentleman," Brilliana answered. "More's the pity that he should be false to his king and his kind."

Sir Blaise smiled condescendingly.

"Believe me, dear lady, you are misled. A woman may be deceived by an exterior. Doubtless he has picked up his gentility in the servants' hall of some great house, and seeks to curry your favor by airing it."

"He has persuaded those that are shrewd judges of men to praise him."

Again Sir Blaise laughed his fat laugh.

"Ha, ha! Shrewd judges of men. I will take no man's judgment but my own of this rascal. Had I word with him you should soon see me set him down."

Brilliana's glance wandering from the pied pomposity who strutted before her, saw a sharp contrast through the yew-tree arch. A man in sober habit was moving slowly over the grass in

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the direction of the pleasaunce, moving slowly, for he was carrying an open book and his eyes were fixed upon its pages. Truly the sombre Puritan made a better figure than her swaggering neighbor. She looked up at Sir Blaise with a pretty maliciousness in her smile.

"You can have your will even now," she said, "for I spy my prisoner coming here—and reading, too."

Sir Blaise swung round upon his heels and stared in the direction indicated by Brilliana. He saw Evander, black against the sunlit trees, the sunlit grasses, and he smiled derisively. He was very confident that there was no courage as there could be no wit in any Puritan. These things were the privileges of Cavaliers.

"His brains are buried in his book," he sneered. "If a stone came in his way now he would stumble over it, he's so deep in his sour studies. 'Tis some ponderous piece of divinity, I'll wager, levelled against kings."

He thought he was speaking low to his companion, but his was not a voice of musical softness, and its tones jarred the quiet air. Evander caught the sound of it, lifted his head, and, looking before him over his book, saw in the yew haven Brilliana seated and a gaudy-coated gentleman standing by her side. He was immedi-

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ately for turning and hastening in another direction, but Brilliana, for all she hated him, would not now have it so. Perhaps she had been piqued by Sir Blaise's too confident assumption of superiority to the judgment of her people; perhaps she thought it might divert her to see Puritan and Cavalier face each other before her in the shadowed circle of yews. Whatever her reason, she raised her hand and raised her voice to stay Evander's purpose.

"Sir, sir!" she cried. "Mr. Cloud, by your leave, I would have you come hither. Do not turn aside."

Thus summoned, Evander walked with slightly quickened pace to the place where Brilliana sat and saluted her with formal courtesy.

"I cry your pardon," he declared. "I would not intrude on your quiet, but I read and walked unconscious that there was company among the yews."

Brilliana answered him with the dignity of a gracious and benevolent queen.

"Do not withdraw, sir; you have the liberty of Loyalty House, and I would not have you avoid any part of its gardens."

Evander bowed. Sir Blaise broke into a horse-laugh which grated more on Brilliana's ears than on Evander's. Brilliana was at heart

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rather angry that for once Puritan should show better than Cavalier.

"You are a vastly happy jack to be used so gently," he bellowed. "Some would have stuck such a hostage in a garret and done well enough."

Evander still kept his eyes fixed on the lady of the house and seemed to have no ears for the jeering Cavalier. With a lift of the hand that indicated and saluted the prospect, he said, smoothly, "You have a very gracious garden, lady."

Mirth shone discreetly in Brilliana's eyes as she gave the Puritan a bow for his praise. The Cavalier, a viola da gamba of anger, pegged his string of bluster tighter.

"Did not the fellow hear me?" he cried, and this time his noise won him a moment of attention. Evander gave him a glance, and then, returning to Brilliana, said, with a manner of amused contempt, "You have a very ungracious gardener."

Sir Blaise's pink face purpled; Sir Blaise's hand swung to the hilt of his sword. Evander seemed to have forgotten his existence and to await quietly any further favor of speech from Brilliana. My Lady Mischief, much diverted, judged it time to intervene.

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"Lordamercy!" she cried, as she rose from her seat and moved a little way towards Sir Blaise. "Let me bring you acquainted."

The Cavalier caught her hand and stayed her before she could speak his name.

"Wait, wait," he whispered. "Watch me roast him."

He swung away from her and swaggered towards Evander. "Tell me, solemn sir," he questioned, "have you heard of one Sir Blaise Mickleton?"

"I have heard of him," Evander answered. His tranquil indifference to Sir Blaise's bearing, to Sir Blaise's splendor of apparel, pricked the knight like a sting. He tried to change the sum of his irritation into the small money of wit.

"You have never heard that he snuffled through his nose, turned up his eyes, mewed psalms and canticles, and dubbed himself by some such name as Fight-the-Good-Fight-of-Faith, yea, verily?"

Sir Blaise talked with the drawling whine which he assumed to be the familiar intonation of all Puritan speech. Like many another humorless fellow, he prided himself upon a gift of mimicry signally denied to him. Even Brilliana's detestation of the Puritan party could

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not compel her to admire her neighbor's performance. Evander's face showed no sign of recognition of Sir Blaise's impertinence as he answered:

"No, truly, but I have heard some talk of a swaggering braggart, prodigal in valiant promise, but very huckster in a pitiful performance; in a word, a clown whose attempt to ape the courtier has never veiled the clod."

Brilliana found it hard to restrain her laughter as she watched the varying shades of fury float over Sir Blaise's broad face at each successive clause of Evander's disdainful indictment. Yet she was sadly vexed to think that her side commanded so poor a champion. Sir Blaise tried to speak, gasped out a furious "Sir!" then his passion choked him, and he gobbled, inarticulate and grotesque. Evander went composedly on:

"He is rated a King's man, and would serve his master well if much tippling of healths and clearing of trenchers were yeoman service in a time of war. But his sword sleeps in its sheath."

"Now, by St. George—" Sir Blaise yelled, raising his clinched fists. Brilliana feared at one moment that he would strike her prisoner in the face; feared in the next that he would fall

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at her feet dead of an apoplexy. She sailed between the antagonists and addressed Evander.

"Serious sir, will it dash you to learn that you are speaking to Sir Blaise Mickleton?"

Evander's countenance showed no sign either of surprise or of dismay. Sir Blaise, still turkey-red, managed to gulp down his choler sufficiently to utter some syllables.

"I am that knight," he gasped; then, turning to Brilliana, he whispered behind his hand, "Mark now how this bear will climb down."

Brilliana, watching Evander, was not confident of apologies. Her prisoner made a slight inclination of the head towards Sir Blaise in acknowledgment of the fact of Brilliana's presentation, and said, very calmly:

"Why, then, sir, such a jury as your world has empanelled have misread you, for if they summed your flaws aptly in their report of you, they clapped this rider on their staggering verdict, that Sir Blaise Mickleton did, at his worst, do his best to play the gentleman."

Smiles of satisfaction rippled over Sir Blaise's face. He did not follow the drift of Evander's fluency but took it for compliment.

"Handsomely apologized, i' faith," he beamed to Brilliana. Brilliana laughed in his face.

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"Why, poor man, he flouts you worse than ever," she whispered.

Sir Blaise knitted puzzled brows while Evander, having made the effective pause, continued, suavely:

"In the which judgment they erred, for he does not merit so creditable a praise. Sure they can never have seen him who couple in any way the name of Sir Blaise Mickleton with the title of gentleman."

Even Sir Blaise's dulness could not misinterpret Evander's meaning, and rage resumed its sway.

"You crow! You kite!" he fumed. His wrath could find no more words, but he made a stride towards Evander, menacing. Brilliana stepped dexterously between the two. As she told Tiffany later, she felt as if she were gliding between fire and ice.

"One side of me was frozen, and the other done to a crisp." She lifted her hand commandingly.

"We will have no bickering here," she protested. Evander paid her a salutation, and, moving a little aside, resumed his book. He would not retire while Sir Blaise was in presence, but he guessed that the lady wished for speech with her friend. Sir Blaise did not find

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her words consolatory, though she affected consolation.

"The bear licks with a rough tongue," she whispered. Sir Blaise slapped his palms together.

"You shall see me ring him, you shall see me bait him, if you will but leave us."

"How shall I see if I leave?" Brilliana asked, provokingly. "But 'tis no matter."

As she spoke she thought of Halfman, and a merry scheme danced in her head.

"Gentles, I must leave you," she cried, with a pretty little reverence that included both men. Then in a moment she had slipped out of the pleasaunce and was running down the avenue. In the house she found Halfman. "Quick!" she cried, breathlessly. "Sir Blaise and Mr. Cloud are wrangling yonder like dogs over a bone."

"Do you wish me to keep the peace between them?" Halfman questioned. Brilliana did not exactly know what she wished. She was fretted at the poor show a King's man had made before a Puritan; if Sir Blaise could do something to humble the Puritan it might not be wholly amiss. So much Halfman gathered from her jerky scraps of sentences; also, that on no account must the disputants be permitted to come to swords. Halfman nodded, caught up a staff,

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and ran full tilt to the pleasaunce. The moment his back was turned Brilliana, instead of remaining in the house, came out again, doubled on her course, and dodging among the hedges found herself peeping unseen upon the enclosure she had just quitted and the brawl at its height.

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XX

SIR BLAISE PAYS HIS PENALTY

WHEN Brilliana quitted them the two men had regarded each other steadily for a few seconds in silence. Then Sir Blaise spoke.

"You made merry with me just now in ease and safety, a lady being by."

Evander shrugged his shoulders.

"Had no lady been by I should have been more merry and less tender."

Sir Blaise scowled.

"I am ill to provoke, my master. Those quarrels end sadly that are quarrels picked with me."

Again Evander shrugged his shoulders.

"I pick no quarrel, sir. You asked me very straightly what I knew of Sir Blaise Mickleton, and very straightly I tended you my knowledge. It is not my fault, but rather your misfortune, that you happen to be Sir Blaise Mickleton."

Sir Blaise dropped his hand to his sword-hilt.

"You Puritan jack," he shouted, "will you try sharper conclusions?"

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In a moment and involuntarily Evander's hand sought his own weapon. It was in that moment that Halfman burst into the pleasaunce.

"Why, what's the matter here?" he cited, wielding his staff as if it had been the scimitar of the Moor. "Hold, for your lives! For Christian shame put by this barbarous brawl."

The disputants greeted their interrupter differently. Evander paid Halfman's memory the tribute of an appreciative smile. Sir Blaise turned to him as to a sympathizer and backer.

"This Puritan dog has insulted me," he cried.

Halfman nodded sagaciously. "And you would let a little of his malapert blood for him. But it may not be."

He addressed Evander. "You are a prisoner on parole, wearing your sword by a lady's favor, and may not use it here."

"You are in the right," Evander answered, "and I ask your lady's pardon if for a moment I forgot where I am and why."

"Yah, yah, fox," grinned Sir Blaise, who believed that his enemy was glad to be out of the quarrel. But Halfman, who knew better, smiled.

"There are other ways," he suggested, pleasantly, "by which two gentlemen may void their

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spleen without drawing their toasting-irons. Why should we not mimic sword-play with a pair of honest cudgels?"

Blaise slapped his thigh approvingly, for he was good at rustic sports. Halfman turned his dark face upon Evander.

"Has my suggestion the fortune to meet with your approval?" he asked. Evander nodded. "Then let Sir Blaise handle his own staff, and you, camerado, take mine—'tis of a length with your enemy's—and set to."

Halfman watched Evander narrowly while he spoke. Skill with the rapier did not necessarily imply skill with the cudgel. He bore Evander no grudge for overcoming him at fence, but if Sir Blaise proved the better man with the batoon, there would be a kind of compensation in it. He had heard that Sir Blaise was apt at country-sports and now Sir Blaise vaunted his knowledge.

"Let me tell you to your trembling," he crowed, "that I am the best cudgel-player in these parts. I will drub you, I will trounce you, I will tan your hide."

"That will be as it shall be," Evander answered. He had taken the staff that Halfman had proffered, and after weighing it in his hand and carefully examining its texture had set it

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up against the seat, while he prepared to strip off his jerkin. Halfman assisted Sir Blaise to extricate himself from his beribboned doublet, and the two men faced each other in their shirts, Evander's linen fine and plain, like all about him, Sir Blaise's linen fine and ostentatious, like all about him, and reeking of ambergris. Evander was not a small man, but his body seemed very slender by contrast with the well-nourished bulk of the country-gentleman, and many a one would have held that the match was strangely unequal. But Halfman did not think so, seeing how deliberately Evander entered upon the enterprise, and even Sir Blaise's self-conceit was troubled by his antagonist's alacrity in accepting the challenge.

"If you tender me your grief for your insolence," he suggested, with truculent condescension, "you will save yourself a basting."

Evander laughed outright, the blithest laugh that Halfman had yet heard pass from his Puritan lips.

"I must deny you, pomposity," he answered, gayly. "It were pity to postpone a pleasure."

"You are in the right," commented Halfman. "Come, sirs, enough words; let us to deeds. Begin."

The sticks swung in the air and met with a

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crack, each man's hand pressing his cudgel hard against the other's, each man's foot firm and springing, each man's eyes seeking to read in the other's the secret of his assault. Suddenly Blaise made a feint at Evander's leg and then swashed for his head.

"Have a care for your crown," he shouted, confident in his stroke; but Evander met the blow instantly and wood only rattled on wood.

"I have cared for it," he said, quietly, as he came on guard again, making no attempt to return Sir Blaise's attack. Sir Blaise reversed his tactics, feinted at Evander's head, and swept a furious semicircle at Evander's legs.

"Save your shins, then," he cried, and grunted with rage as he again encountered Evander's swiftly revolving staff and heard Evander answer, mockingly:

"I have saved them."

Inarticulate fury goaded him. "I will play with you no longer!" he growled, and made a rush for Evander, raining blow upon blow as quickly as he could deliver them, and hoping to break down Evander's guard. But Evander, giving ground a little before his antagonist's onslaught, met the attacks with a mill-wheel revolution of his weapon which kept him scatheless, and then suddenly his cudgel shot out,

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came with a sullen crack on Sir Blaise's skull, and the tussle was over. Sir Blaise was lying his length on the grass, very still, and there was blood upon his ruddy hair.

Brilliana in hiding gave a little gasp when she saw her neighbor fall; she could not tell whether to laugh or cry at the defeat of the Cavalier. She saw Halfman bend over the fallen man and lift his head upon his knee. She saw Evander advance and look down upon his adversary.

"I hope you are not hurt," Evander said, solicitously.

Halfman glanced up at the victor. "No harm's done," he said. "He was stunned for the moment; he is coming round."

And in confirmation of his words Sir Blaise opened his eyes, and then with difficulty sat up and stared ruefully at Evander.

"Gogs!" he said, first rubbing his head and then looking at his reddened palm. "Gogs! That was a swinging snip. I am as dizzy as a winged pigeon."

"Let me help you to rise," Evander said, courteously. Blaise shook his aching head.

"I am none too fluttered to find my feet," he asserted, ignoring the fact that his rising from the ground to an erect posture was entirely due to the combined efforts of Halfman and Evan-

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der, one on each side, and then, when he did get to his feet, he was only able to retain the perpendicular by leaning heavily upon Halfman as a steady prop. From under his bandaged forehead his pale-blue eyes regarded Evander with no trace of enmity.

"Your hand, Puritan—your hand!" he cried. "'Tis just that we clasp hands after a scuffle."

Puritan and Cavalier clasped hands in a hearty grip. "I am at your service," Evander said, gravely. "Shall we continue?" Sir Blaise shook his head again.

"I have had my bellyful," he grunted. "There was breakfast, dinner, supper in your stroke. I must to the house to find vinegar and brown paper to patch my poll."

"Can I aid you?" Evander offered. "I have some slight skill in surgery."

"Leave him to me," Halfman interposed. "I have botched as many heads as I have broken."

Sir Blaise, leaning heavily on Halfman's arm, replied to Evander's offer in his own way.

"I will not have you mend ill what you have marred well. Come, crutch, let us be jogging. We will meet again another time, my fighting Puritan."

Evander made him a bow. "At your pleas-

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ure," he replied, and stood till Sir Blaise, leaning on Halfman, had hobbled out of the pleasaunce and limped out of sight. Then he drew on his jerkin again with a smile and a sigh.

"Truly," he thought, "for a man who has but three days to live, I cannot be said to be wasting much idle time." With that he took up again the book he had laid down and was soon deep in its study.

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XXI

A PUZZLING PURITAN

So deep was Evander in his book that he did not hear a lady's footfalls on the grass. When the discomfited Sir Blaise had quitted the arena Brilliana held herself unseen and then swiftly sped back to the pleasaunce. She stood for some seconds on the threshold of a yew arch watching the reading man and wondering why it had pleased Providence to make a Puritan so personable and skilful, wondering why she of all women should take any interest either in his person or in his skill, wondering how long he would remain buried in his tiresome book unconscious of her presence. She decided that she would slip away and leave him ignorant of her coming, and having decided that, she coughed loudly, at which sound, of course, he turned round, saw her, and rose respectfully to his feet.

"I fear I trespass in your paradise," he said, wistfully.

"My honor, no!" Brilliana cried, pretending

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to look about her anxiously. "But where is Sir Blaise? I hope you two did not quarrel."

"No, no," Evander protested; "we parted on clasped hands. Some pressing matter called him to his quarters."

"Did you pay him apology for your equivocal wit?" Brilliana asked, demurely.

Evander answered gravely: "He professed himself satisfied."

Brilliana feigned a cry of horror.

"I trust you did not eat your words."

Evander shook his head.

"I am not so hungry. Have I your leave to go?"

He made as if to depart; Brilliana met his motion with a little frown.

"Are you so eager?" she asked, in a voice in which regret and petulance were dexterously commingled.

Evander answered her gravely. "Yesterday you said that a Puritan presence was hateful."

Brilliana laughed blithely and her curls quivered in the sunshine.

"You must not harp on a mad maid's anger. Yesterday you were my enemy, a thing of threats and treason. To-day all's different; to-day you are my guest. Soon you will ride hence, and we will, if Providence please, never

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meet again. But for a span of hours let us make believe to be friend and friend, till Colonel Cromwell send my cousin and your liberty."

Evander was tempted to quarrel with himself for being so ready to welcome this overture. But yesterday this woman had spattered him with insults, snared him on a strained plea, bargained away his life for the body of a spy. Yesterday she had shuddered at the thought of any link of kinship between them, as she might have shuddered at kinship with a wronger of women, a killer of children, a coward. Yet today, as she stood there, sunshine on her hair, sunshine in her eyes, a fairy lady standing in that circle of solemn yews, he could find in his heart no regret for anything that had brought him to her presence. He would take gladly what she offered gayly, two days of friendship with so radiant a maid—and then? He left that thought unanswered to reply to Brilliana.

"Madam," he said, with a very ceremonious bow, "I will pretend that we are going to be friends till the end of my life."

Brilliana clapped her hands like a child that has been promised some coveted comfit.

"You are brave at make-believe. In the mean time let us keep each other company a little. Surely it is dull for a man of action to be

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a prisoner, and for my own part I mope sadly now that my little war is well over."

She had seated herself as she spoke, and she motioned to Evander to take his place by her side. When she paused he asked:

"Are you so strenuous an amazon?"

She answered him very earnestly:

"I miss the splendid music of the siege, the stir of arms, the bustle of giving order, the alertness of expectation. I did not think a woman's life could be tuned to so high a diapason. Just think of it! Yesterday, and for many yesterdays, I was a leaguered lady, a priestess of battles; I stood for the King; existence was one fierce ecstasy. To drop from that brisk spin and whetted edge of life into this housewife's twilight is all one with being some sea-old admiral and drowning in a canal."

The daughters of Israel could not have thrown more sadness into their voice, Evander thought, as they sang by the waters of Babylon. If her face was fair in animation, it seemed still more fair in sadness.

"Has the Lady of Harby no employment," he asked, gently, "to spur the trudging time?"

Brilliana laughed rather cheerlessly.

"Oh, mercy, yes! Can she not overwatch the gardener to see that he planteth the right

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sort of herbs and flowers at the new of the moon, at moon full, and at moon old? She can chat with Mistress Cook of sallets and fricassees and fritters; she can count the linen; she can preserve quinces; she can distil you aqua composita or imperial water, or water of Bettony, against she grow old; she can be dairy-wise, cellar-wise, laundry-wise—oh, there are a thousand thousand things she can do if she want to do them, but the plague of it is, since I have burned powder, these decent drudgeries no longer divert me."

She gave a little sigh as she ended her enumeration of a housewife's tasks, and then banished the sigh with a smile. Evander found himself thinking that a man might count himself happy for whom this lady should sigh so at parting and smile so in welcome. But what he said was:

"Against your next distillation I can give you a very praisable recipe for a cordial. It is a Swedish fancy and much favored by the ladies of the North."

Brilliana looked him full in the face and laughed very merrily, and he felt his cheeks redden at her gaze and her mirth.

"Was there ever such a man-marvel?" she asked. "All my people praise you for some

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different accomplishment. A horseman, a gardener, the best at fence, the best, too, with a cudgel—"

"Ah, madam," Evander interrupted, apologetically, "pray how has that come to your ears?"

"Never mind how it came," Brilliana answered, "so that it has come and that I owe you no ill-will for teaching a foolish gentleman a lesson. But you can shoot, it seems, and play games, and are apt in out-door arts and wise in out-of-doors wisdom—for all the world like a country gentleman."

"Madam, I am, as I hope, a gentleman, and as for the country knowledge, I have lived its life in many lands and learned something by the way."

"And now," Brilliana bantered on, "you boast some science of the still-room, and Mistress Satchell speaks of a Spanish manner of grilling capons. Are you, perhaps, a herald as well as a master cook, and do you know something of the gentle and joyous craft of the huntsman?"

Evander took her in her humor and bandied back the ball of qualification.

"I can prick a coat indifferently well," he responded, solemnly, "and if such trifles delight you, I can blaze arms by the days of the week

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or the ages of man or the flowers of the field, though I hold that a true herald will never stray beyond colors."

Brilliana nodded her head with an air of profound approval. "Better and better," she murmured. Evander went on with his catalogue of self-compliment.

"And as for my woodcraft, I can name you all the names of a male deer, from hind calf, year by year, through brocket and spayed, and staggard and stag, till his sixth year, when he is truly a hart and has his rights of brow, bay, and tray antlers. I am skilled in the uses of falcon-gentle, gerfalcon, saker, lanner, merlin, hobby, goshawk, sparrow-hawk, and musket—"

Brilliana interrupted him with an impetuous gesture of command, and Evander made an end of his display.

"Enough, enough!" she cried. "I feel like Balkis when she came to sip wisdom from Solomon's goblet. If I question you further I may find that, like my Lord Verulam, you have taken all knowledge for your province. This is something uncanny in a Puritan."

Evander protested.

"Why should a man deny the arts of life because he finds strength in the faith of the Puritans?"

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"I know not why," Brilliana answered, "but so it is generally believed among us who are not Puritans."

"There are fanatic fellows with us as in all causes," Evander admitted, "and some, it may be, who wear moroseness to gain favor. But these are no more than the fringe of a stout cloak. I am no exceptional Puritan, I promise you. Colonel Cromwell himself—"

Brilliana interrupted him with a frowning imperiousness.

"Let us not talk of Colonel Cromwell," she commanded.

"I wish you would let me speak of Colonel Cromwell," Evander pleaded. "He has long been my dear friend, and—"

"Let us not talk of Colonel Cromwell," Brilliana repeated, with a peremptory stamp of the foot. "I want to talk of you and your curious Puritanism. I thought you were all too hypocritically devout to have any care for the toys and colors of life."

"To be devout is not to be hypocritical," Evander urged, gently. "And, to speak for myself, I hope I am devout, but I do not find my faith weakened by honorable enjoyment of honorable pleasures. Yet, indeed, what poor accomplishments I can lay claim to—and to

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afford you diversion, I have somewhat exaggerated their scope and number—are due directly to my being a Puritan—"

"You are pleased to be paradoxical," Brilliana asserted. Evander put the suggestion aside with a head shake.

"To my being a Puritan and to my being of your kin. When I was a boy I learned of that kinship, learned how her marriage with a Puritan had earned for a woman of your race the scorn, indeed the hatred of her family, or those who should most and best have loved her."

"You do not understand how strongly those who think as we think feel on such a matter," Brilliana urged, one-half of her spirit angry that she was speaking almost apologetically, the other half vexed that the first half was not more angry.

"Forgive me," said Evander, "but I do understand; I understand very well; I made it my business to understand. And, therefore, I resolved that so far as in me lay I would show those who scorned my people and my creed that a Puritan might compete with his enemies in all the arts and graces they held most dear, and not come off the worst in all encounters."

"That was a brave resolve!" Brilliana's eyes

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and voice applauded him. He flushed a little as he went on.

"It was a kind of oath of Hannibal. God was gracious in the gift of a strong will, and I stuck to my purpose. I mastered arts, acquired tongues, forced myself to dexterity in all manly exercises. I had a modest patrimony which allowed me to travel after I left Cambridge, and so gain that knowledge of the world which is so dear to English gentlemen. And always in my thoughts it was: some day I may meet some son of the house that cast us out and show him that a Puritan might fear God and yet ride a horse, fly a hawk, and use a sword with the best of his enemies."

"Instead of which," said Brilliana, as he paused, "you meet a daughter of the house and play your well-practised part to her." Her voice was stern now and her eyes shone fiercely as she leaned forward and continued in a low voice, "Was this the cause of your coming to Harby?"

"No," Evander answered. "I should never have come to Harby of my own accord. But news came to Cambridge of your flying the King's flag. The example was dangerous; Harby was a good house for either side to hold. Colonel Cromwell commanded me to march

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with the volunteers I had raised at Cambridge to secure Harby in the name of the Parliament."

"And you were very glad to obey," Brilliana said, bitterly, and again Evander shook his head.

"I was very sorry to obey. But I had no choice. Colonel Cromwell was my father's friend; he knew the story of my people; he set it upon me as a special seal for righteousness that I should do this thing 'Kin shall be set against kin in this strife,' he said, 'father against son, and brother against brother. Go forth in the name of the Lord and pluck the banner of Baal from the wall of Harby.' And I went."

Brilliana, lifting her head, looked over the green wall of yews to where, in the cool, gray-blue of the October sky, the royal standard fluttered its gaudy folds in the wind. She said nothing, but her smile spoke whole volumes of victories; the panegyrics of a thousand triumphs gleamed in her eyes. Evander read smile and gleam rightly.

"True, I failed," he admitted. "Yet I may not say that I am sorry, for if I had not failed I should have lost a friend."

He looked admiringly at her, but Brilliana drew herself up stiffly and regarded him coldly.

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"You may be my kinsman without being my friend," she said, with a sourness which had the effect of making Evander laugh like a boy.

"Why, lady," he protested, "it is not ten minutes since that you proffered me your friendship."

"Did I so?" Brilliana asked, puckering her brows as if in doubt, though she had not the least doubt upon the matter.

"Indeed, madam," said Evander, very earnestly, "friends for a lifetime." Brilliana snapped contradiction.

"No, no; it was you who said that. I admit the friendship for three days."

"And I assert the friendship of a lifetime," Evander persisted. His voice and his eyes were very merry, but there came an unconquerable gnawing at his heart that, in spite of the fair place and the fair face and the sweet discourse, life for him meant no more than a space of three days. Well, then, he would live his three days bravely, brightly. He lifted his eyes to the lady.

"Are you of Master Amiens' school?" he asked—

"'Most friendship is feigning, most love is mere folly.'"

She made no reply to his question, but its

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matter surprised her and prompted her to another.

"Do you go to Master Shakespeare's school?" she asked; and even as she spoke she leaned forward to look at the book he had laid down and to which, till that moment, she had paid no heed. She drew it towards her and saw what it was.

"Why, here are his plays. Can you affect him when 'tis known that the King loves him?"

"I would the King had no worse counsellors," Evander said, gravely.

Brilliana had lifted the big book onto her lap and was turning the pages tenderly, pausing here and there with loving murmurs.

"Had I been a man," she said, softly, "I should have turned player for the pleasure to speak such golden words."

Evander, watching her fair, lowered face under its crown of dark hair, thought of all that Imogen might mean, or Rosalind or Juliet, did each of these dear ones show on the stage like this lady. He gave the odd thought form in speech.

"It is strange," he said, almost to himself, "that a Cavalier world is content without women players."

Brilliana lifted her face from the book, and

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there was a look of astonishment and even of pain upon it.

"Oh, that is quite another matter," she said, quickly. "That could never come to pass."

Evander's Puritanism, recalled to recollection of itself, felt compelled to assent.

"I trust not," he said, gravely. He was looking at Brilliana with eyes that were honestly admiring. She rose from her seat.

"I must dismiss you now," she said, "for I have much to do ere dinner. You will dine with me, I pray."

Evander made her a not uncourtly bow.

"If I be not unwelcome," he suggested.

Brilliana shook her head very positively.

"We are pledged friends for the time, and friends love to break bread together."

There was no countering this argument. Evander took up the folio and made its owner another bow.

"I will attend you at the dinner-hour," he said. "This treasure I restore to its home."

As the Parliament man moved away across the grass, his image very dark against its green, Brilliana looked after him, nursing her chin in her palm and her elbow on her knee. As he entered the house with the big book under his arm she took out her pretty handkerchief, and

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with much deliberation tied a small knot in one corner of it.

"Master Puritan, Master Puritan," she murmured, "I must tie a knot in my handkerchief to remind me that you and I are enemies."

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XXII

MASTER PAUL AND MASTER PETER

At the dinner-hour Halfman came for Evander, where he sat in the library, and told him that Lady Brilliana awaited him. The meal was served in the banqueting-hall, a splendid, panelled room with deep-embrasured windows, from which the defences had now been removed and through which the inmates could have noble views of the lawns and gardens beyond the moat. The little company of three seemed, as it were, lost in the vastness of the chamber as they sat at meat together at the oak table by the hearth at one end of the room, Brilliana at the head, with Halfman at her right and Evander at her left as the guest and stranger. It proved a vastly pleasant meal to Evander, for the talk was brisk and entertaining, and there was no allusion made to those civil and religious differences which in distracting the country had their curious effect, so unimportant to the country, so important to themselves, of bringing that oddly assorted trio together. Brilliana gave a

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gracious equality of attention to her companions; showed no keener interest in her new visitor than she had found in the conversation of her old acquaintance, and thus made both men very happily at their ease. Indeed, Halfman was at his best that afternoon, playing the genial, ripe, mellow man of the world to perfection, so that Evander found him a most entertaining board-fellow.

They were at the fruit, and Halfman showing them tricks of carving faces in October apples, when Tiffany skipped into the room a-twitter with excitement.

"My lady," she cried, "here is come Master Paul and two of our people bearing a great box. And I can spy Master Peter and his party with another at the turn of the road."

Halfman laughed loudly; Brilliana laughed softly; Evander wondered what there was to laugh at.

"Lodge them apart and bring them in by turn," Brilliana gave order. "Master Paul first and then Master Peter. This is rare. Bring them in, bring them in."

Tiffany fluttered out and Evander rose from his chair.

"Shall I leave you, lady?" he asked, thinking that she would be private. But Brilliana would

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not hear of this and motioned to him to keep his seat.

"Nay, sir, stay," she said, "if you would see some sport."

Even as she spoke Tiffany returned, ushering in Master Hungerford, followed by two men in Brilliana's livery, bearing with pains a chest which they set down with a deep breath of relief. Tiffany, who was now in the secret, pretended to be busy at a sideboard so as to stay in the room. Master Paul rubbed his lean fingers together and scraped to the company.

"You have been swift, Master Hungerford," Brilliana said, approvingly. Master Hungerford smiled furtively.

"Who would not use despatch in the King's cause and yours. 'Tis as I said: the pestilent Roundhead had a chest full of broad-pieces stuffed under his bed. And here it now is at your feet." And he pointed victoriously at the spoils of war. Brilliana applauded as if she had been at the play.

"You have done well," she said, with the tears in her eyes for laughter. Halfman kept a grave face and Evander wondered.

"Call me your knight," Master Paul pleaded, with a languishing look.

"You have done well, my knight," Brilliana

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repeated; then, turning to Tiffany, she bade her see that the chest was set in a place of safety. The two men took up their burden again and followed Tiffany out of the room. But in a jiffy the maid was back again and whispering in her mistress's ear.

Brilliana turned her amused gaze upon Master Paul.

"Master Hungerford," she entreated, "will you be so good as to wait awhile in the next chamber. I have some immediate business to deal with, but I would be loath to part company with you so soon if you have the leisure to wait."

Master Hungerford, protesting his readiness to attend upon her pleasure, was promptly ushered by Halfman into an adjoining room, where he left him, and having closely shut the door, came back shaking with suppressed laughter to Brilliana. Evander, looking from the mirthful man to the mirthful maid, felt constrained to question.

"Why are you so merry?"

"You will know ere the sun is much older," Brilliana answered, composing her countenance, "for here comes the other."

As she spoke Tiffany returned, ushering in Master Peter Rainham and a fresh brace of Brilliana's servants, staggering, like their pred-

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ecessors, under the weight of a great chest. The certainty that some astonishing jest was towards set Evander on the alert as he scrutinized the forbidding form and features of the new-comer.

"Welcome, thrice welcome, Master Peter Rainham," cried Brilliana. "You have made good speed."

Master Peter proffered her an uncouth salutation and pointed to the chest on the floor significantly.

"Lady," he said, "I have done the King a good turn. There are gold plates there, gold dishes, gold ewers, that will change in the melting-pot to many a troop of horse for the King's cause."

"I thank you with all my heart," Brilliana said, quietly.

Master Peter leered cunningly at her, and earned the cordial dislike of Evander.

"Do you give me your heart with your thanks?" he asked, with what he believed to be gallantry.

Brilliana made a little fanning motion at him with her hand.

"You are too hot," she said. Then ordered Tiffany, "See these treasures despatched to the King under guard."

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As before, the serving-men took up the chest, which seemed even heavier than the former box, and were convoyed by Tiffany out of the room. Then Brilliana turned to Master Peter, who stood apart biting his nails awkwardly.

"Master Rainham," she said, "you have shown rare discretion and made brave despatch. I would thank you at greater length were it not that I have company. There is one in the next room who waits to see me. Entreat the gentleman to enter, Captain Halfman."

Halfman went to the nigh door, and, opening it, summoned with beckoning finger its tenant to come forth. Master Hungerford emerged radiant. For a moment neither squire saw the other. Then Master Rainham, looking away from Brilliana, saw Master Hungerford; and Master Hungerford, looking away from Halfman, saw Master Rainham.

To those who watched the comedy the silence was intense, and throbbing with possibilities as summer air throbs with heat. Brilliana heard Master Rainham say, "What a devil, Master Hungerford," and Halfman, for his part, averred later that Master Hungerford, too, greeted his neighbor's presence with an oath. The spectators wondered what would happen: it was plain as noon that each squire for an instant

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believed that the other had discovered larceny and had posted to avenge it. But while each man knew of his own guilt neither could guess or did guess at the other's theft, and neither reading anger in the other's visage, each concluded that the meeting was a piece of chance, and each resolved to make the best of it, laughing heartily in his sleeve at the other's catastrophe. So "Good-morrow, neighbor," nodded Master Paul, and "Good-day, good-day," responded Master Peter, and Brilliana thought her bodice would burst with her effort to keep her appreciation a prisoner.

"Why, sirs," she cried, "this is a good seeing, a pair of neighbors under my roof."

"What does this fellow here?" Master Paul asked behind his hand of Halfman, who answered, very coolly,

"He comes to pay court to our lady."

At the same moment, beneath his breath, Master Peter was questioning Brilliana, "Why is that disloyal rogue here?" Brilliana answered, with a pretty toss of the head:

"Would you ever believe it? He came to assure me of his devotion to me and his zeal for his Majesty."

Master Peter, in wrath, looked more porcine than ever.

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"The lying knave," he grunted. "What are his words to my deeds?"

"What, indeed," answered Brilliana, demurely. "I pray you persuade him hence."

"So that I may return alone?"

Thus Master Peter interpreted Brilliana, and the minx gave him a glance which might well be taken as justifying his interpretation. At this moment Master Paul broke in upon their colloquy.

"A word with you, I pray you," he said, sourly, "if my good neighbor will give me good leave."

Master Rainham withdrew a little way his self-satisfaction and himself, while Master Paul whispered to Brilliana:

"You know me now: I am proved your friend. Prithee get rid of that mean huckster."

Brilliana desired nothing better. She gave him the same advice that she had given his neighbor, and was mischievously delighted to find that he interpreted it after the same fashion. It did her heart good to see how the two squires approached each other with many formal expressions of good-will, each persuading the other to depart, and each warmly proffering companionship on the homeward road. In the end they went off together arm in arm, each

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endeavoring to convey to Brilliana by nods and winks that he proposed to return alone very shortly.

As soon as they were fairly gone Brilliana and Halfman allowed themselves to laugh like school-boy and school-girl, and then Brilliana commanded Halfman to take order that neither gentleman was to be admitted again. When he had gone on this business she turned to Evander.

"Well," she said, "have you found the key to the riddle?"

"You have made these two neighbors plunder each other?" he hazarded. Brilliana nodded gleefully, and then, guessing at disapproval in his gravity, she asserted, defiantly:

"It was for the King's cause. Everything is right for the King's cause."

At this flagrant enunciation of Cavalier policy Evander could not but smile.

"How will it end?" he asked. He was to learn that very soon, but first he was to learn other things of greater import to himself.

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XXIII

A DAY PASSES

A DAY is twenty-four hours if you take it by the card, but the spirit of joy or the spirit of sorrow has the power to multiply its potentialities amazingly. Both these spirits walked by Evander's side during his second day at Harby. The one that went in sable reminded him that his horizon was dwindling almost to his feet; the other, in rose and gold, hinted that it is better to be emperor for a day than beggar for a century. And truly through all that day Evander esteemed himself happier than an emperor. For he had discovered that Brilliana was the most adorable woman in the world, and, knowing how his span of life was shrinking, he allowed himself to adore without let or hinderance of hostile faiths and warring causes. He did not, as another in his desperate case might have done, make the most of his time by using it for very straightforward love-making. There was a fine austerity in him that denied such a course. Were he an undoomed

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man his creed and his cause would forbid him to philander; being a doomed man, it could not consort with his honor to act differently. But he was radiantly happy in her constant companionship, and the hours fled from him iris-tinted as he relived the age of gold.

But if Evander trod the air, there was another who pressed the earth with leaden feet and carried a heart of lead. Halfman read Evander's happiness with hostile eyes; he read, too, very clearly, Brilliana's content in Evander's company, and he raged at it. He had grown so used to himself as Brilliana's ally that he had come to dream mad dreams which were none the less sweet because of their madness. He had rehearsed himself if not as Romeo at least as Othello, and if Brilliana was not in the least like Desdemona that knowledge did not dash him, for he thought her much more delectable than the Venetian, and he thanked his stars that he was not a blackamoor. He had not pushed his thoughts to a precise formula; he had been content to delight during the hours of siege in the companionship of a matchless maid, and now the maid had found another companion, and he knew that he was fiercely in love and as foolishly jealous as a moon-calf. Brilliana was as kind to him as ever, but she gave her time to

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the new man, and Halfman, inwardly bleeding and outwardly the magnificent stoic, left the pair to themselves and absented himself at meal-times on pretext of pressing business with the volunteer troop. But his temper grew as a gale grows and would soon prove a whirlwind.

The garden-room at Harby was one of its many glories. Its panelled walls, its portraits of old-time Harbys, its painted ceiling, were exquisite parts of its exquisite harmony. On the side towards the park the wall was little more than a colonnade—to which doors could be fitted in winter-time, and here, as from a loggia, the indweller could feast on one of the fairest prospects in Oxfordshire. Across the moat the gardens stretched, in summer-time a riot of color, flowers glowing like jewels set in green enamel. In the waning autumn the scene was still fair, even though the day was overcast as this day was, from which the weather-wise and even the weather-unwise could freely and confidently prophesy rain. Brilliana dearly loved her garden-room for many things, most, perhaps, because of its full-length portrait of her King, an honest copy from an adorable Vandyke, to which, as to a shrined image, Brilliana paid honest adoration. She knew more about the picture than any one else

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in Harby, and used sometimes to wonder if the knowledge would ever avail her. In the mean time, ever since the troubles began, she always bent a knee whenever she passed the portrait. She had never seen her King, yet she felt as if she saw him daily, visible in the living flesh, so keenly did her loyalty seem to quicken color and canvas. Brilliana was not the only soul in England whose loyalty gave the King a kind of godhead, but if she had many peers she had none, nor could have, who overpassed her.

On the morning of the third day of Evander's stay at Harby, Halfman sat on the edge of the table in the garden-room and stared through the open doorway into the green beyond. He was alone, and he had flung off the stoic robe and was very frankly an angry man and very frankly a dangerous man. What he saw in the garden maddened him; his eyes glittered like a cat's that stalks its prey. He had no room in his thoughts for the cottage of his earlier dreams, with its pleasant garden and its lazy hours over ale and tobacco. He thought only of a woman quite beyond his reach, and his heart lusted for the lawless days when your lucky buccaneer might take his pick of a score of women by right of fire and sword and tame his choice as he pleased.

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To this mood fortune sent interruption in the person of Sir Blaise Mickleton. Sir Blaise had opened the door expecting to find in the room Brilliana, whom he had come with a purpose to visit, and instead of Brilliana he found this queer soldier swinging his legs from the table and scowling truculently. From what Sir Blaise had already seen of Halfman he found him very little to his mind, but he reflected that he had come on a mission, that Brilliana was nowhere in sight, and that Halfman, who had served her during the siege, might very well direct him where he should find her.

As Halfman took no notice whatever of him, Sir Blaise deemed it advisable, in the interests of his mission, to attract his attention. So he gave a politic cough and followed it with a "Give you good-morrow" of such sufficient loudness that Halfman could not choose but hear it. He did not change his attitude, however, or turn his face from the window, as he answered, in a sullen voice,

"I should need a good-morrow to mend a bad day."

Sir Blaise had not the wit to let a sleeping dog lie, but must needs prod it to see if it could bark. So he very foolishly said what were indeed obvious even to a greater fool than he.

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"You seem in the sullens."

The sleeping dog could bark. Halfman turned a scowling face upon the knight as he answered, malevolently:

"Swamped, water-logged, foundering. You are a pretty parrakeet to come between me and my musings."

The tone of Halfman's speech, the way of Halfman's demeanor were so offensive that the knight's cheap dignity took fire. He swelled with displeasure, flushed very red in the gills, and cleared his throat for reproof.

"Master Majordomo, you forget yourself."

Halfman proved too indifferent or too self-absorbed to take umbrage. He stared into the garden again with a sigh.

"No, I remember myself, and the memory vexes me. I dreamed I was a king, a kaiser, a demigod. I wake, rub my eyes, and am no more than a fool."

Sir Blaise was patronizingly forgiving. He was thirsty, also the morning was chilly.

"Let us exorcise your devil with a pottle of hot ale," he suggested. Halfman shook his head wistfully.

"I should be happier in a sable habit, with a steeple hat, and a rank in the Parliament army."

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It was plain to Sir Blaise that a man must be very deep in the dumps who was not to be tempted by hot ale.

"Lordamercy, are you for changing sides now?" he asked.

As Halfman made him no answer but continued to stare gloomily into the garden, Blaise concluded that the interest lay there which made him thus distracted. So he came down to the table and looked over Halfman's shoulder. In the distance he saw a man and woman walking among the trees. The man was patently the Puritan prisoner, the woman was the chatelaine of Harby. The pair seemed very deep in converse. As Sir Blaise looked, they were out of sight round a turning. Halfman gave a heavy groan and spoke, more to himself, as it seemed, than to his companion.

"Look how they walk in the garden, ever in talk. Time was she would walk and talk with me, listen to my wars and wanderings, and call me a gallant captain."

"Are you jealous of the Puritan prisoner?" Blaise asked, astonished. Halfman answered with an oath.

"Oh, God, that the siege had lasted forever, or that she had kept her word and blown us sky high."

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Blaise began to snigger.

"Ods-life! do you dare a love for your lady?" he said. He had better not have said it. Halfman turned on him with a face like a demon's and the plump knight recoiled.

"Why the red devil should I not," Halfman asked, hoarsely, "if a bumpkin squire like you may do as much?"

Blaise tried to domineer, but the effort was feeble before the fierceness in Halfman's glare.

"Are you speaking to me, your superior?" he stammered. Halfman answered him mockingly, with a voice that swelled in menace as the taunting speech ran on.

"Will you ride against me, cross swords with me, come to grips with me any way? You dare not. I am well born, have seen things, done things 'twould make you shiver to hear of them. Come, I am in a fiend's humor; come with your sword to the orchard and see which of us is the better man."

Sir Blaise was in a fair panic at this raging fury he had conjured up and now was fain to pacify.

"Soft, soft, honest captain; why so choleric? I would not wrong you. But surely you do not think she favors this Puritan?"

"Oh, he's a proper man, damn him!" Half-

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man admitted. "He has a right to a woman's liking. And he must love her, God help him! as every man does that looks on her."

Blaise looked pathetic.

"What is there to do?" he asked, helplessly. Halfman struck his right fist into his left palm.

"I would do something, I promise you. He is no immortal. But we shall be rid of him soon. If Colonel Cromwell do not surrender Cousin Randolph we are pledged to his killing, and if he do, then our friend rejoins his army; and I pray the devil my master that I may have the joy to pistol him on some stricken field."

Sir Blaise thought it was time to change the conversation.

"Let us leave these ravings and vaporings," he entreated, wheedling, "and return to the business of life. And 'tis a very unpleasant business I come on."

Halfman drew his hand across his forehead as a man who seeks to dissipate ill dreams. Then, with a tranquil face, he gave Blaise the attention he petitioned.

"How so?" he asked. Any business were a pleasing change from his sick thoughts.

"Why, I am a justice of the peace for these parts," Sir Blaise said, "and I am importuned

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by two honest neighbors to process of law against your lady."

Halfman laughed unpleasantly.

"The Lady Brilliana's wish is the law of this country-side, I promise you."

He grinned maliciously and fingered at his sword-hilt. Sir Blaise felt exceedingly uncomfortable. Here was no promising beginning for a solemn judicial errand. But the knight had a mighty high sense of his own importance, and he felt himself shielded, as it were, from the tempers of this fire-eater by the dignity of his office and the majesty of the law. So he came to his business with a manner as pompous as he could muster.

"Master Rainham and Master Hungerford are exceedingly angry," he asserted.

Halfman flouted him and his clients.

"Because she bobbed them so bravely? The knaves came raving to our gates when they found how they had been tricked into picking each other's pockets. But I made them take to their heels, I promise you. You should have seen their fool faces at the sight of a musket's muzzle."

Sir Blaise looked righteously indignant.

"Sir, sir," he protested, "muskets will not mend matters if these gentlemen have been

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wronged. They came hot-foot to me, and in the interests of peace I have entreated them hither. They wait without in the care of two of your people to keep them from flying at each other's throats."

Halfman heard the distressing news with equanimity.

"Why not let them kill each other?" he suggested, blandly. Blaise lifted his hands in horror.

"Friend," he said, "in this mission I am a man of peace. Will you acquaint your lady?"

Halfman grunted acquiescence.

"Oh, ay; bring in your boobies."

He turned on his heel and swung out through the doorway into the garden.

Sir Blaise looked after him for a moment disapprovingly, then he went to the door by which he had entered, and, opening it, called aloud,

"This way, gentlemen, this way."

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XXIV

A HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE

THERE was a loud, scuffling noise without, as of the trampling of many feet and the inarticulate growlings of wild beasts. Then Clupp entered the room, clasping in his mighty arms the long body of Master Paul Hungerford. He was followed by Garlinge, who was performing the like embracive office for the short body of Master Peter Rainham. The two angry gentlemen plunged and struggled impotently to free themselves from their guardians and hurl themselves at each other's throats. They might as well have tried to free themselves from clamps of iron. To the master-muscled Garlinge and Clupp—a strong Gyas, a strong Cloanthes, no less—they were no more difficult to restrain than would have been a brace of puling babes. Even their speech was not free to make amends for their captivity, for they were so brimful of choler and had so roared and shrieked their rage ere this that the torrent of their fury spent itself in vacant mouthings and splutter-

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ings. Sir Blaise eyed the brawlers with exceeding disfavor.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," he entreated, "be calm, I beg of you."

At the sound of his voice the disputants found theirs, or rather found themselves restored to command over human speech. Each turned towards Sir Blaise, swaying over the clasped arms of his captor.

"Sir Blaise," screamed Master Paul, "in the King's name I call upon you to commit this thief to jail."

"Set that footpad in the pillory, Sir Blaise," yelled Master Peter. Then they turned upon each other again.

"You rogue," cried Master Paul.

"You rascal," answered Master Peter.

In a second they were again struggling to get at each other, and were, as before, imperturbably held asunder by Garlinge and Clupp.

Again Sir Blaise protested.

"Good friends, be calm, I entreat you."

"I'll cut his heart out," Peter vociferated, stabbing a dirty hand in the direction of his enemy.

"I'll make him mincemeat," Paul promised, sawing at the air.

Sir Blaise, turning away in disgust, saw how

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in the garden Brilliana was making for the house. He frowned on the malcontents.

"Hush, here comes the lady."

Even as he spoke Brilliana entered from the garden, followed by Evander and Halfman. The girl looked as bright as sunlight as she greeted the company.

"Good-morning, Sir Blaise; good-morning, my masters."

Then she burst out laughing at the furious faces and helpless gesticulations of the irate claimants. Her laughter was very delightful for most men to hear, but it goaded the squires to frenzy.

"Sir Blaise," cried Master Paul, "I call you to witness that the lady laughs at us."

"Sir Blaise," cried Master Peter, "there stands our undoing." Brilliana frowned a little and turned to Halfman.

"Friend," she said, "will you see order here."

"Very blithely," Halfman answered. He commanded the servants.

"You, Garlinge and Clupp, see that your prisoners keep silence."

Master Paul and Master Peter began to protest in chorus.

"We are no prison—" But they got no

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further, for Garlinge and Clupp silenced them by clapping huge hands over their gaping mouths. Brilliana gave a little sigh of relief at the welcome quiet.

"Now, Sir Blaise," she asked, "why are these gentlemen here?"

Sir Blaise made salutation and answered, "Truly, most paradisiacal lady, these gentlemen make grave allegations that you did insidiously incite them to the commission of a felony."

Brilliana looked from Sir Blaise to the muffled, grappled plaintiffs and made mirthful decision.

"I represent the King here. I will try this matter."

Blaise felt bound to lodge protest against this monstrous proposition.

"Perhaps, most Elysian of fair ladies, it would be, as one might say, more seemly if I, as a justice of the peace—"

Brilliana daffed him down.

"Sir Blaise, we are at war now, and by your leave I will handle this matter after my own fashion."

"I must protest," Blaise bleated, but Brilliana would not listen to him.

"You must do nothing," she insisted, "but

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help me to set chairs. One here for me, one there for you, my brother justice; one there for Captain Cloud, who, as a stranger of distinction, shall have a seat on the bench."

"I thank you for the honor," said Evander, watching the scene with much entertainment. As Brilliana talked she, with Blaise and Halfman, had been busy placing seats as she directed at the table.

"Captain Halfman," Brilliana went on, "you write a clerkly hand. Sit you here; you shall be our clerk. Arraign the prisoners."

By this time all were seated as Brilliana had disposed; Sir Blaise had completely surrendered his dignity to her spell. Even Halfman found pleasure in the grotesque sham trial.

Garlinge and Clupp brought their charges down to face the newly formed tribunal. Halfman spoke.

"Here, my lady, we have two hobs who have come to loggerheads as to which is best disposed to the King. Garlinge, let Master Hungerford speak." Garlinge removed his massive hand from his prisoner's mouth, and Paul, after gaping like a fish for some seconds, gasped out,

"Lady, you know well enough how you have befooled us."

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Brilliana stared upon him, bewitchingly unembarrassed by the charge.

"Manners, master," cried Halfman, angrily, "or I'll manner you."

Brilliana daintily deprecated his heat.

"Wait, wait," she said. "First of all, are you a loyal subject of the King?"

Master Paul rubbed his chin dubiously. "That is as it may be," he muttered.

Brilliana tapped the table. "Faint hesitation is flat treason," she cried. Turning to Halfman, she commanded, "Write him down for a confessed Roundhead."

Master Paul clawed towards her excitedly.

"No, no; pray you not so fast," he entreated. "I am a good King's man."

Brilliana condescended approval.

"He amends his plea," she noted to Halfman. Master Paul went on, fractiously,

"But that does not make me love to be plundered."

Brilliana rose and, resting the tips of her fingers on the table, addressed Master Hungerford sternly.

"Master Hungerford, one of two things. Either you are a Roundhead, in which case you have no rights in loyal, royal Oxfordshire—say I not well, Sir Blaise?"

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"Marvellous well," Sir Blaise assented.

"Ergo," Brilliana continued, "having no rights you have no goods, having no goods you cannot be plundered."

"Yet I was plundered," Master Paul protested. Brilliana exorcised the plea.

"We shall convince you to the contrary. If you are no Roundhead then you are a stanch Cavalier, and in the King's name you confiscated certain gear of your fellow-prisoner."

Now, while Paul was being interrogated Clupp had removed his hand from Master Peter's mouth and contented himself with holding him fast. Master Peter now saw an opportunity to assert himself.

"I am not a prison—" he began, but was not suffered to speak further. Instantly Clupp's palm closed again upon the parted jaws and reduced him to silence once more, while Brilliana went on.

"In doing which you deserved well of his Majesty."

"Ay, all was well so far," Master Paul grumbled; "but he played the like trick upon me at your instigation."

Brilliana would not hear of it.

"You misuse speech. 'Tis no trick to serve

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the King. As I understand, each of you accuses the other of robbing him."

Master Paul agreed. Master Peter, gagged behind Clupp's hand, nodded dismally. Brilliana went on.

"This is at first blush a dilemma, but our wit makes all clear. Each of you, avowedly in the King's name, did descend upon the dwelling of a disaffected rebel and make certain seizures there which have been duly sent to his Majesty. Each of you is, therefore, proved to be a loyal subject and honorable gentleman. So far you are with me, Sir Blaise?"

"Surely, surely," the knight agreed.

"Yet, on the other hand," continued Brilliana, "each of you accuses the other of robbing him. Now to rob is to offend against the King's law, to be, therefore, an enemy to the King; and an enemy to the King is a Roundhead. Is not this well argued, Sir Blaise?"

"Socrates could not have bettered it," commended Sir Blaise.

"We arrive, therefore, at the strange conclusion," said Brilliana, judicially, "that each of you is at the same time an honest Cavalier and a dishonest Roundhead. Now, as no man living can be in the same breath Cavalier and Roundhead, it follows as plainly as B follows A

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that whichever one of you complains of the other is avowedly the King's enemy and a palpable rebel."

Master Paul scratched his head.

"I do not follow your reasoning," he mumbled. Brilliana appealed to the justice of the peace.

"Yet it is very clear. Is it not, Sir Blaise?"

"Limpidity itself," Sir Blaise approved, complacently. Brilliana resumed.

"One or other of you is a traitor and shall be sent to Oxford in chains, to await the King's pleasure and his own pain. I care not which it be."

"You have set me in such a quandary," Master Paul protested, "my head buzzes like a hive."

Brilliana directly questioned him.

"You, Master Hungerford, are you a King's man?"

Master Paul was vehement in asseveration.

"I am a King's man, hook and eye."

"Then," Brilliana assumed, "'tis Master Rainham must fare in chains to Oxford."

Master Rainham, staring at her over Clupp's paw, had such appealing terror in his eyes that Brilliana pitied him.

"'Tis your turn now," she said. "Let him give tongue, Clupp."

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Clupp withdrew his hand and Master Rainham gurgled:

"I proclaim myself a faithful subject of the King. Let that dog trot to Oxford."

"You matchless basilisk!" screamed Master Paul at him, and "You damnable mandrake!" retorted Master Peter. The pair would have flown at each other if they could have wriggled free. But as they could not they perforce resigned themselves to hear what Brilliana would say next.

"Why, then, it stands thus," Brilliana summed up. "This court decides that you are both servants of the King; that you have both done the King good service, willing and yet unwilling. I think I shall have some little credit with the King, and I shall use it with his Majesty by entreating him to grant the grace of knighthood to two honest friends of mine and two honest lovers of his — Master Hungerford and Master Rainham."

Master Paul looked at Master Peter; Master Peter looked at Master Paul. Master Paul smiled. Master Peter smiled.

"A knighthood!"

Master Peter mumbled the word lovingly. Master Paul blew a kiss towards Brilliana.

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"Then I shall be indeed your knight," he simpered.

"Are you content?" Brilliana asked, gravely, and the two squires answered in union,

"We are content."

"Then this worshipful court adjourns sine die. Captain Halfman, see that our friends be refreshed ere they depart."

Halfman rose, and with a "Follow me, sirs," made for the door. Sir Blaise stooped over Brilliana's finger-tips.

"Farewell, my lady wisdom. Solomon was not more wise nor Minos more sapient."

"I thought you would uphold me," Brilliana replied. "Farewell."

Sir Blaise saluted Evander, who returned the salutation and quitted the room. Master Paul, taking leave of Brilliana, whispered,

"When I am knight, you shall be my lady."

"When you are king, diddle-diddle, I shall be queen," Brilliana laughed at him, making a reverence. He joined Halfman at the door and Master Peter approached Brilliana.

"When I wear my new title, I will lay it at your feet," he promised, solemnly.

"Can you not keep it in your own hands?" Brilliana questioned. She made him a reverence, he made her his best bow and went to

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the door, where Master Paul waited with Halfman. Here a point of ceremony arose.

"After you, Sir Peter," Master Paul suggested. Master Peter fondled the title.

"Sir Peter! It sounds nobly. Nay, after you, Sir Paul," he protested. They were at this business so long that Halfman lost patience.

"Stand not on the order of your going," he growled between his teeth, then grasping with an air of bluff good-fellowship an arm of either squire, he banged them somewhat roughly together.

"Nay, arm in arm, as neighbor knights should," he suggested, and so jostled them out of the chamber and conducted them to the buttery, where for the next hour he diverted himself by making them very drunk indeed.

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XXV

ROMEO AND JULIET

BRILLIANA turned to Evander.

"Well, Captain Puritan, are you displeased with me?"

Evander disclaimed such thought.

"Why should I be displeased that you, a King's woman, serve the King?"

Brilliana was pertinacious.

"If you were a King's man would you applaud me?"

"If I were a King's man," Evander confessed, "I could not choose but applaud you."

"But being a Puritan?" Brilliana persisted.

"Why," said Evander, "being a Puritan, I must ask you, were you just to your victims?"

Brilliana swept them away disdainfully.

"Each would have cheated the King in an hour, when, to all who think with me, to cheat the King is little better than to cheat God. But your scrupulosity need not shiver. If the King do not knight my misers I will requite them, little as they deserve it."

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Evander admired her.

"You are a brave lady."

Brilliana gave a sigh.

"No, I am not brave at all; I am newly very timid. I am frightened of the real world now, and feel only at my ease with shadows."

"Shall we journey into shadow-land?" Evander asked.

"By what path?" Brilliana questioned. Evander touched a brown, torn book.

"Shall we read again in Master Shakespeare's book?"

For indeed they had read much in his pages that morning. Brilliana looked pleased.

"Yes, indeed. Let us go into my paradise."

She looked into the garden and came back with a shiver.

"Ah, no, it is raining. It rained when the King raised his standard at Nottingham. Well, well, we can read here."

Evander was turning the leaves.

"What shall we read? Comedy, history, tragedy?"

Brilliana was for the solemn mask.

"Let it be tragedy. I have laughed so much this morning that my mind turns to melancholy."

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Evander looked up at her with his finger on a page.

"Shall we read 'Romeo and Juliet'?"

"I know that play by root of heart," Brilliana said.

"Truly, so do I," said Evander.

Brilliana was silent, pensive, a finger on her lip, considering some project. Then she said, doubtfully:

"You spoke the other day of women players, a thing that seemed to me incredible. Shall we see how it would seem here for us two? Let us while away a wet morning by playing a stage play."

Evander's heart leaped.

"With you for the sweet scene in the garden," he cried.

In a moment Brilliana was busy in the setting of her scene. She pulled round a heavy, high-backed chair and leaped into it, leaning over the back and looking up as if the painted ceiling glowed with the stars of an Italian night. Then the words flowed from her, the wonderful words:

"'O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou, Romeo?
Deny thy father and refuse thy name:
Or if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,
And I'll no longer be a Capulet.'"

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Evander said his line a little stiffly; he was awkward, being a man.

"'Shall I hear more, or shall I speak at this?'"

Brilliana flowed on:

"'"'Tis but thy name that is my enemy:
Thou art thyself though not a Montague.
What's Montague? It is nor hand nor foot,
Nor arm nor face. O be some other name
Belonging to a man.
What's in a name? That which we call a rose
By any other word would smell as sweet;
So Romeo would, were he not Romeo called,
Retain that dear perfection which he owes,
Without that title.—Romeo, doff thy name;
And for thy name which is no part of thee,
Take all myself.'"

Evander put heart now into his part as he moved towards her.

"'"I take thee at thy word.
Call me but love, and I'll be new baptiz'd;
Henceforth I never will be Romeo.'"

Brilliana affected to peer into the darkness of a green garden.

"'"What man art thou, that thus bescreened in night,
So stumblest on my counsel?'"

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Evander answered, very earnest now:

"'By a name
I know not how to tell thee who I am:
My name, dear saint, is hateful to myself,
Because it is an enemy to thee:
Had I it written, I would tear the word.'"

Brilliana's voice faltered as she took up the tale.

"'My ears have not yet drunk a hundred words
Of thy tongue's uttering, yet I know the sound.
Art thou not Romeo, and a Montague?'"

Evander was quite near now to the chair and the fair maid perched upon it, and the words trembled on his lips.

"'Neither, fair maid, if either thee dislike.'"

He put out his hands and caught hers for a moment. Then she drew them free and jumped down. She went to the open space and looked into the wet garden with a hand to her head and a hand to her heart. Evander followed her.

"Ah, me," she said, "love was a heady god in Verona. Here in England he could not solder such hostilities."

Evander answered her passionately.

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"Here in England love is a more glorious god yet, for he can fling a Puritan soldier at the feet of a Cavalier lady."

Brilliana still stared straight before her.

"We have drifted from the land of shadows."

Evander spoke from his heart.

"We have drifted into reality. I love you. I cannot change my faith for that, I cannot change my flag. But believe this, remember this, that in the Parliament's army one Puritan is as true your lover as all the Cavaliers who worship you."

Brilliana turned and looked at him now, very steadfastly:

"You do not speak by the book."

"No, only by my heart," Evander answered, simply. "I tell you my soul's truth. I love you, I shall love you to the end, whether the end come in a battle on a windy heath, or in an oblong box of a bed."

Brilliana's eyes were bright and kind.

"You do not know what you are saying. I do not know what you are saying. The world would have to change before I could listen with patience to words of love on the lips of a rebel."

Evander answered her bravely.

"I know that. I did not hope; but I had to set my soul free. To the end of ends I shall

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cherish you, live for you, die for you: very lonely, well content."

Brilliana turned away. The heart of Juliet within her was big almost to breaking.

"The rain ceases; I must go into the air."

Even as she spoke, the door opened and Tiffany ran in.

"My lady!" she cried; "my lady, John Thoroughgood rides up the avenue on a foundering horse!"

Brilliana gave a great cry and went ghost-white.

"Dear God, the letter! I had forgotten the letter!"

Tiffany slipped from the room. Evander answered Brilliana's cry very calmly.

"For the second, so had I. But, indeed, dear lady and friend, I know its terms."

"You cannot be sure," Brilliana whispered.

"I am sure," Evander replied. "I know Colonel Cromwell."

The door opened again and Thoroughgood entered, splashed with mud and carrying a letter in his hand.

"My lady," said Thoroughgood, "I have ridden hard and long to find the rebels. I have killed two horses; I had to wait on Colonel Cromwell's leisure; I was fired at thrice as I

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rode. At long last and through many perils here is the letter."

"I thank you," Brilliana said. "You are a faithful servant. Seek wine and food and rest."

Thoroughgood saluted her and went out. He looked fagged to exhaustion. In the passage he found Tiffany, kissing-kind. Brilliana opened the letter and read it slowly. Then she gave a cry.

"Pray you read, lady," Evander said, composedly. Brilliana complied in a hard, set voice.

"MADAM,—The prisoner with whom you claim kinship was sentenced to be shot as a spy this morning. My loving greetings to my very dear friend, Mr. Cloud, who, if you chose enough to murder him, will, I know, meet death as a Christian soldier should.

"OLIVER CROMWELL."

"The wicked villain," Brilliana cried.

"Nay, lady," Evander argued tranquilly—he must carry himself well now—"the true captain doing his duty. It hath cost him a pang to sacrifice me; he would have sacrificed his son Henry or his son Richard in the like case."

Brilliana clasped and unclasped her hands.

"I care nothing for his son Henry or his son Richard."

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"You care nothing for me?" Evander affirmed, slowly.

"I do care," she said, hotly. "We have broken bread together, played games together, masked at friendship till the sport became reality."

"Lady," said Evander, "I thank you for the kindness you imply. Our friendship has been brief, but passing sweet. I shall die on a divine memory."

"Why, sir," she gasped, "you do not think I could kill you now?"

"You vowed I should die if your cousin died," he reminded her. "I think you must keep your word. It is the fortune of war."

"The fortune of war!" Brilliana gave a bitter laugh. "I would not have you die to save—Oh, I must not say—but fly, sir, fly! Ride hot and hard to Cambridge, where you will be safe. You shall have the best horse in my stable. You are my prisoner. I give you back your parole. Only, for God's sake, go! My friends would kill you if they caught you here."

Evander begged a boon.

"May I kiss your hand before I go?"

Brilliana tried to smile.

"A Cavalier would not have asked."

"I am Puritan, ingrain," he asserted.

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"You are a dear gentleman."

She sighed and held out her hand. As he stooped to salute it the door was dashed open and a man booted and spurred flung into the room. As he stood for a moment amazed at what he saw, Brilliana, turning, recognized Sir Rufus Quaryll. She disengaged her hand from Evander's and moved a little towards him. Evander instinctively felt for his sword. Sir Rufus's face was a great blaze of red.

"In the devil's name, what does this mean?" he shouted.

Brilliana drew herself up.

"You forget yourself," she said, haughtily. Rufus barked at her with rage.

"You have forgotten yourself; in the arms of a doomed traitor."

"Civil words, sir!" Evander cried, moving on him. Brilliana motioned him to hold back.

"This gentleman is no traitor."

An open letter lay at Rufus's feet. He pounced on it and read. He was pale now, the white heat of anger.

"Gentleman! Oh, I know much, guess all. Randolph is dead there yonder, and this rogue, who should be dead and ditched here, lives. Faugh! But he dies now."

On the word he had drawn his sword and ad-

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vanced upon Evander, whose own sword was no less swiftly out. Brilliana came between the two men.

"If you kill him, you kill me," she said.

"By God, you deserve to die!" was Rufus's answer.

In the headiness of their brawl none of the party had noticed how the door had opened again and how a man stood at gaze in the doorway. A slender man of middle height, in travel-stained riding-habit of black; a man with a comely, melancholy face and sad eyes; a man who seemed very weary. He wore a jewelled George. For a moment the new-comer stood unheeded, then he advanced into the room. Sir Rufus heard him, turned, and cried, "The King!" Evander sent his sword back into its sheath. Brilliana knelt in reverence. This was the hero, almost the divinity, the monarch she worshipped, the sovereign she had never seen.

"Gentlemen, what is this?" the King asked. He turned to Brilliana.

"Lady, why did you not come to greet me?"

Brilliana rose.

"Your Majesty—" she began, but Rufus interrupted her hotly.

"Forgiveness, sire. I dashed ahead to warn

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her of the great honor you offered, halting here from Banbury, only to find her slobbering on a Roundhead gallows-bird."

Brilliana looked steadfastly at the King. She was very pale but not at all afraid.

"Your Majesty, this man slanders basely. This gentleman is honorable."

"Honorable!" Rufus repeated, in derision.

"Silence, sir!" Charles commanded. "Who are you?" he asked of Evander. Evander saluted.

"Captain Evander Cloud, of the Parliamentary army."

"How come you here?" the King inquired.

Brilliana answered for him.

"Your Majesty, he was taken prisoner treacherously, though the treachery was mine, three days ago. I offered his life in exchange for the life of Randolph Harby."

"And Randolph Harby is dead," said Rufus, "shot as a spy by the devilish rebel of Cambridge. See, sire—see!"

He offered the letter to Charles, but the King put it from him. His face was inscrutable as Evander urged his case.

"Your Majesty, I am no spy, and my life could not be pawned for a spy's life."

Charles's sad eyes travelled to Brilliana.

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"Randolph Harby was no spy," he said. "You held this gentleman hostage for your cousin's life?"

"I did make that offer," Brilliana admitted. The King frowned now.

"And yet he still lives. I thought this was called Loyalty House."

"Disloyalty House it should be called now," Rufus taunted. Brilliana turned upon him fiercely.

"You lie! you lie! you lie!" she hurled the words at him, hating him. Charles held up his hand.

"Peace! This is not the welcome I expected here. We did not think to find rebels tendered so delicately. Sir Rufus, we give you charge of Harby and of this gentleman. We will consider his claim presently, for we would deal honestly even with our enemies."

He looked at Evander.

"But we can give you little hope, sir. Prepare to die."

Fretfully he addressed Rufus.

"I am very weary. I must break my fast." He glanced coldly at Brilliana.

"Lady, we shall not need your attendance."

Brilliana made her master a deep reverence.

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"I take my leave, your Majesty." She went close to Evander.

"Can you forgive me?" she begged. Evander looked into her wet eyes joyously.

"Read in my heart that I thank God to have known you, loved you."

Brilliana laid a hand for a moment on his shoulder and spoke in a soft, even voice.

"You have been my enemy; you have been my friend; you are now the one man in all the world for me. Read in my heart that I thank God to have known you, that I thank God that I love you. Remember, I love you, Evander. Farewell."

Then she saluted the King and went slowly out of the room without looking back.

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XXVI

RESURRECTION

SOME hours later Rufus Quaryll sat alone in the garden-room, writing. It was coming on dusk; candles had been lit, the fire was ruddy on the hearth. Rufus, as he wrote, was well content with the turn of things. He raged at Brilliana, but she should marry him all the same when the Puritan dog was dead. He had, as he believed, convinced the King at meat that the plea Evander raised was valueless, that Evander's life was rightly forfeit. Evander was under close guard; so, indeed, was Brilliana, for he had stationed a sentry at the door of her apartments: he was determined that she should not see the King again. Now the King lay in the inner room, sleeping; when he rose it would be easy to get the order for Evander's death. Furious in his hate, furious in his love, he would neither spare Evander nor surrender Brilliana. She should be his wife, if he had to drag her before an altar.

As he thought and wrote, the door opened

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and Halfman entered the room. Rufus, lifting his head, faced him with a finger on his lips while with the other he pointed to the door of the inner chamber.

"Hush!" he whispered; "the King sleeps. But all is well. He has as good as promised the Puritan shall die."

"All is not so well as you think," said Halfman, sardonically. "Here comes one more pleased to see you than you to see him."

He went to the door again and ushered in a man who had waited outside, a man muffled in a cloak, and his face hidden by the way his hat was pulled over it. The man advanced slowly towards the surprised Rufus, and suddenly dropping his cloak and throwing back his hat uncovered a youthful, jovial face. Rufus gaped at him in despair and gasped a name:

"Randolph!"

Randolph Harby dropped into a chair and chuckled.

"No wonder you stare as if you faced a spectre. But I'm flesh and blood, lad."

Rufus, trying to collect himself against this staggering blow, again raised a warning hand.

"For Heaven's sake speak lower! The King is asleep yonder. How do you come here?"

Randolph leaned over and whispered, gig-

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gling, into Sir Rufus's ear. Halfman watched with grim amusement. If he loved Evander little, come to think of it he loved Rufus less, all said and done; so he grinned at his discomfiture.

"A wonder," Randolph said. "When they had the time to try me, their fools' court-martial, thanks to that damned Cromwell, settled me for a spy and sentenced me to be shot. But the jailer where I lay had a daughter. Need I say more? We Harbys are invincible. Any way, there was no prisoner when the shooting-party came to claim me, and here I am, in time, I hope, to save the life of that poor Puritan devil."

Sir Rufus's wits were busy hatching mischief. He looked with aversion at the smiling, self-complacent ass whose resurrection tangled his plan. But his voice was very amiable as he asked:

"Do any in the household know of your return?"

"Devil a one," the youth answered, cheerily, and Sir Rufus would have liked to drive a knife into him for his mirth, though his spirits rose at his answer. "I thought to take my cousin by surprise, scare her with my ghost, maybe. So I came skulking through the park and ran

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on this good sir, who nabbed me." He indicated Halfman with a wave of the hand. "I explained to him, so that my joke should not spoil, and he smuggled me in here to surprise you. Where is Brilliana?"

Rufus looked at him thoughtfully.

"Are you fresh enough to ride?" he asked.

"If need be," Randolph replied, astonished.

Rufus talked rapidly, writing a letter as he spoke.

"Then you may save your Puritan yet. We sent your hostage to Oxford for safe-keeping. News came of your death, and but now the King sent an order to have the fellow shot. But you can overtake the order, outstrip it. Here is a reprieve for the prisoner."

Rufus folded the paper, sealed it, and handed it to the bewildered Randolph.

"Pick what horse you please, and ride for the honor of our cause."

Randolph gasped.

"May I not see the King?"

Rufus refused him firmly.

"Impossible. His Majesty sleeps."

"My cousin Brilliana?" Randolph asked. "What of my joke?"

Rufus spoke very solemnly.

"The one thing now is to save a man's life.

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Ride hard, and God speed you." Randolph yielded cheerfully.

"Well, well, I should be sorry the rebel dog should die wrongfully. You will justify me to the King for not attending him?"

Rufus nodded.

"I will justify you to his Majesty."

"And not a word to Brilliana," Randolph iterated. "I will have my joke on my return. Farewell."

He muffled himself again and went out quickly. Rufus sat biting the end of his quill. Halfman stepped forward and made him a series of extravagant salutations, which parodied the most elaborate congees of a dancing-master. Rufus glared at him.

"What is the matter with you?" he asked, savagely. Halfman leered apishly at him.

"You are a splendid scoundrel," he vowed. "Do not frown. I have lived with such and I speak in praise."

Rufus struck his hands upon the table.

"I will have this Puritan devil," he swore, "if the King do not play the granny."

Halfman winked at him, diverted by his heat and hate.

"Say that more softly, for I think I hear him stirring."

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The two listened in silence. The curtains of the inner room were parted and Charles entered the room. He still looked haggard, ill at ease.

"Was any one here?" he asked, as the two men rose respectfully. Rufus answered, glibly:

"No, your Majesty. We spoke in whispers to respect your rest. Did your Majesty sleep well?"

"Ill, very ill," Charles answered, drearily. "I had bad dreams and could not wake from them. Leave me, sirs."

Rufus solicited his eyes.

"And the prisoner?"

Charles looked at him vaguely.

"The prisoner?"

"The rebel hostage for murdered Randolph Harby," Rufus reminded him.

Charles looked vexed.

"Oh yes, I suppose he must die. Surely he must die. His plea is specious, but Randolph Harby is dead."

"Brave, murdered Randolph." Rufus's regret was pathetic. "Shall I give order for the firing party?" He made as if to write. Charles frowned.

"You are over-zealous, sir; I have not made up my mind."

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Rufus read obstinacy in the royal face and knew that it were useless to argue further then.

"As your Majesty please," he submitted.

The King seated himself heavily at the table and fixed his eyes upon an open map. Behind his back Rufus shrugged his shoulders and left the room. Halfman followed, a very Jaques of meditations, touched by the pathos of the tired King, grimly diverted by the ruffianism of Rufus. A mad world!

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XXVII

THE KING'S IMAGE

THE melancholy King sat in the great room alone. His eyes were fixed on the map, but his mind was far away, over yonder in Holland where she was—she, the Queen. The thought of her beauty troubled him; her soft voice seemed to be whispering at his ear in her pretty broken English. Some lines in a play he knew came into his mind, lines uttered by a king who, like himself, had known the horror of civil war, lines which said that it were better to be a shepherd and tend sheep than to be an English king. He sighed and his handsome head drooped upon his breast, and the brown hair that was graying so fast hid his cheeks. His eyes were wet and he could not see the map; it was all a blur of meaningless criss-cross lines. This would not do; he must think, he must plan, he must decide; but his head remained bent and the map remained a criss-cross puzzle.

The image of himself, which faced him as he sat, that picture of a king, royal, joyous, un-

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challenged, seemed to move a little, as if the bright figure on the canvas sought to approach and reassure the dejected man who crouched over the map of a divided kingdom. It did move, the serene Van Dyck portrait; it moved a little, and a little, and a little more; moved sideway as a door moves, yawned a foot of space between frame and wall, and through that foot of space Brilliana slipped into the room.

"Your Majesty," she said, softly.

The King gave a little start as he lifted his head and looked at her. She thought she had never seen so pitifully a weary face as the face of her King, and her heart ached for him, but it ached most for her lover.

Charles rose to his feet, flawlessly courteous, much wondering.

"How did you come here, mistress?" he asked, and she sighed at the tired sound of his voice. "I understood from Sir Rufus that you were for the time—"

He paused, and Brilliana calmly finished the sentence.

"Confined to my apartments. Yes, that was Rufus's plan. But though Rufus calls himself captain of this castle he does not know it so well as I do. There are ways of getting hither and thither that he does not dream of."

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"You are a determined young woman," the King said, with a faint smile, "if you think so lightly of the privacy of your King."

Brilliana flung herself on her knees in a moment, her hands clasped, her eyes shining with honest tears.

"Your Majesty!" she cried; "your Majesty, I would never have dared this if I were not a woman very deep in love, if my lover were not in danger, and if—"

She paused.

"And if?" Charles echoed, his fine, irresolute face neither smiling nor frowning. "Finish your sentence, lady."

"And if I had not heard that your Majesty was a very perfect, true lover," Brilliana went on. "Your Majesty's love for the gracious lady now in France is the admiration of your subjects."

A faint color glowed on the King's pale cheeks. He was indeed the perfect, true lover of Henrietta Maria, and the greatest sorrow of all the clustering sorrows that the civil war had brought him was her absence from his side.

"It would be strange indeed if I did not love such a lady," he said, gently; "but that lady is my queen, my wife, my comrade, my loyal friend, while he you plead for is but an ac-

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quaintance of a few days, and, moreover, in all thoughts and deeds your enemy — and mine."

Brilliana had now risen to her feet and she faced the king valiantly, for she knew that she would have to plead hard and well.

"Your Majesty," she answered, "as for the acquaintanceship, one of our poets has said, 'Whoever loves that loves not at first sight?' and though indeed at first sight I was far from giving this gentleman my love, I saw in him at once those qualities which in a man deserve love. As for his enmity, we are told that we should love our enemies."

A frown overspread the King's face and Brilliana faltered.

"I cannot claim for myself that wealth of charity," Charles said, "that would make me love those that by rebellion and contumacy have plunged poor England into war."

"Sire, sire," Brilliana sighed, "if you will but pardon this gentleman I will promise you that I will never love another of your Majesty's enemies."

Charles frowned.

"I do not like your loyalty. Why do you plead for the life of a rebel?"

"I am your servant, none loyaller," Brilliana

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answered, boldly; "but I am a woman, and I plead for the man I love."

"If you were truly loyal," Charles commented, "you could not love a traitor."

Brilliana pressed her hands tightly against her breast and her face flushed.

"Captain Cloud is not a traitor. He is honest before God."

Charles admired her pertinacity. Here was a woman who would not lightly lose heart or change purpose.

"I will not wrangle with you," he said. "I think the gentleman deserves death. But because I know very well what it is to love truly, why, I will let you save him if you can."

Brilliana's voice was charged with gratitude. "Oh, your Majesty is always noble. But how?"

Charles looked at her fixedly, touching his chin with the feather of his quill. "Thuswise —only thuswise. You will persuade Captain Cloud to return to his allegiance."

Brilliana's gratitude ebbed and her voice hardened. "I know he will never change sides."

An enigmatic smile passed over the fretful face of the King. "I think so, too," he agreed, and turned again to his papers. But Brilliana

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was not to be so rebuffed. Coming a little nearer to Charles, she fell on her knees and extended her hands in supplication. "Sire, my lover's life!"

Charles, who had lost nothing of her actions, though he affected to be wholly absorbed in his business, looked round and down at her with much assumption of surprise.

"You are still there? You are a pertinacious maykin."

"Sire, in the Queen's name!" Brilliana pleaded. The King sighed.

"Well, one more concession, this is the last—the very last." Charles prided himself on his firmness, and he struck the table as he spoke to emphasize his unalterable resolve. "If you win me his word of honor to take no more part in this war, to remain neutral till King humble Commons or Commons murder King, why, it is enough; he lives."

Brilliana shivered at the King's alternative. "Your Majesty cannot believe that the worst of your subjects would aim at your sacred life?"

The King's fine eyes were more than usual melancholy, and he opened and clasped his long fingers nervously.

"I cannot choose but believe it. Their words

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are wild—that is trifling. But long ago, when I was young, there was a man, one Arthur Dee, a wizard and the son of a wizard, he had a magic crystal—ah, Father in heaven!"

Charles gave a groan and hid his face in his hands, Brilliana thrilled with compassion. "Your Majesty!" she cried; "your Majesty!"

Charles drew his hands away from his face. He rose, and, as he spoke, he stared fixedly before him as if he saw the sight he was describing.

"In that sphere I saw a platform hung with black. On it I seemed to see myself staring at a sea of hateful faces. One with a mask stood by my side who carried an axe. I have never forgotten it."

He stood rigid, with clasped hands. Brilliana shuddered at his words.

"Sire! sire! this was some lying vision."

With an effort the King controlled himself; his features softened to their habitual melancholy, his hands relaxed their clasp, and he seated himself again by the table.

"Belike, belike; I am unwise to think upon it," he said, in a low voice. Leaning across the table, he struck a bell sharply. The door opened and the soldier in immediate attendance upon the King entered.

"Tell Sir Rufus to attend us," the King said.

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The soldier bowed and withdrew. Charles looked up at Brilliana. "Sir Rufus will be loath to lose his prey," he said. "He is a fierce hawk that clings to his quarry."

"He was once my friend," Brilliana said, sadly. The King smiled his melancholy smile.

"If I were in his place," he said, gravely, "I think I might be tempted to play his part. You are a very fair maiden."

Brilliana shook her head. "The love that makes a man base is no good love. He will never be my friend again."

"Here, as I think, he comes," Charles said. The door opened and Sir Rufus entered the room. He was so amazed at facing Brilliana that for a moment he forgot to render salutation to the King. Charles's eyes brightened as they used to brighten at the playhouse. Here was a living play being played before him, tragical, comical—man and woman fighting for a man's life.

"Sir Rufus," he ordered, "send to our presence the prisoner, the Parliament officer."

Rufus glanced at Brilliana's stern, averted face; he read something like mockery on the thin, royal lips. For an instant he ventured to protest.

"But, your Majesty—" he began, but he got no further. The King checked him with a

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frown and a raised hand. It was easy to make him obstinate in crossing a follower.

"You have heard my commands," he said, sternly.

Sir Rufus bowed his head and retreated. There was nothing else for him to do. He just glanced at Brilliana as he went out. If Brilliana had seen the glance she would have read his rage and hate in it. But she did not see it, for her head was still averted. The King saw it, however, and he felt that the situation was alive. He turned to Brilliana.

"I am a complaisant monarch, as I think," he said. "Now, lady, do your best to make your sweetheart see reason. Honestly, I do not think he is worth so many words, but you think otherwise, and for your sake I wish you a winning tongue."

Brilliana bowed deeply. "I humbly thank your Majesty," she said, and felt that the King had done much for her. From offering the impossible he had come to offering the possible. It seemed a little task to persuade a lover committed to a wrongful cause to lay aside his sword and wait the issue.

The King's eyes had fallen on his papers again, and he did not lift them thence nor take heed of Brilliana again until the tread of feet

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was heard in the corridor. In another moment Evander, escorted by two royal troopers, entered the room. There was a sudden gladness in his eyes at the sight of Brilliana, but he at once saluted the King in a military fashion and stood quietly at attention waiting the royal word.

Charles rose from his chair, and for a moment his melancholy eyes travelled from the beautiful girl standing by the window to the gallant soldier standing by the door. The face of Evander pleased his scrutiny far more than the face of Rufus, and it came into his mind that he would gladly enroll Evander under his standard and hand over Rufus to the Crop-ears. Truly the Puritan soldier and the Lady of Loyalty House made a brave pair.

"Sir," he said, quietly, "this lady desires speech with you, and has persuaded me to permit an interview." He turned to the troopers.

"Wait outside the door, sirs," he commanded. When they had obeyed he looked again towards Brilliana, and there was a smile on his tired face, a smile partly whimsical, partly pitying, as if encouraging to an adventure yet doubtful of the result. Then he gave her a gracious salutation, and, without further notice of Evander Cloud, passed into the adjoining room and left the lovers alone.

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XXVIII

LOVER AND LOVER

EVANDER turned to Brilliana with question in his eyes; Brilliana advanced towards Evander with question on her lips.

"Are you very sure you love me?" she queried. Evander made to take her in his arms, but she stayed him with a lifted hand of warning.

"Sure," he answered, fervently, and surety shone in his eyes.

Brilliana leaned against the table at which the King had sat and faced him gravely.

"More than life, more than all things in the wide world?"

Evander's answer came as flash to flint.

"More than life; more than all things in this wide world—" there was a momentary fall in his voice; then he added, "save honor."

A little sudden fear pricked at Brilliana's heart, but she tried to deny it with a little, teasing laugh.

"Oh, that wonderful word 'honor,'" she

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mocked. "I thought we should pull that out of the sack sooner or later."

Evander watched her with surprise. "What is coming next?" he wondered. He began to fear as he answered, simply:

"You would not have me neglect honor?"

Brilliana's face was set steadfastly towards him; Brilliana's eyes were very bright; Brilliana's cheeks were as red as the late October roses.

"Here is what I would have you do," she said, breathlessly, and then paused—paused so long that Evander, watching and waiting, prompted her with a questioning "Well?"

Brilliana still seemed to hesitate. That word "honor" had frightened her for Evander, had frightened her for herself. She now groped uncertain, who thought to tread so surely.

"Will you do as I wish if I tell you?" she asked, trying to mask anxiety with a jesting manner. And when Evander responded gravely, "If I can," she pressed him impetuously again.

"Nay, now, make me a square promise." She looked very fair as she pleaded.

"All that a doomed man can do—" Evander replied, smiling somewhat wistfully.

Brilliana shook her head vehemently and her Royalist curls danced round her bright cheeks.

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"You are no doomed man unless you choose," she asserted, hotly. Evander moved a step nearer to her.

"What do you mean?" he asked. Brilliana was panting now. He knew she had somewhat to say, and newly found it hard in the saying. She spoke.

"His Majesty the King will grant you your life." Her words and looks told him temptingly that "your life" meant also "my life" to her.

"On what condition?"

He knew there must be a condition, knew that the condition troubled Brilliana. She answered him swiftly.

"Oh, no condition at all." There came a catch in her voice and then she ran on:

"Or almost none. All his Majesty asks is that you refrain from taking any further part in this unhappy war."

She paused and eyed him. Evander's face was unchanged.

"No more than that?" he commented, so quietly that, reassured, she rippled on, volubly:

"No more than that. We can be wed, dear love. We can go away together to France, Italy, where you please. I have always had a mind to see Italy. And when England is quiet

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again we can come home, come here and be happy."

She felt as if she were flinging herself at his feet, shamelessly offering herself, to tempt him, to dazzle him, conquer him that way; to witch his promise out of him before he had time to think. Yet for all her vehemence there was a chill at her heart and a cloud seemed to hover over her sunny words. Unwillingly she looked away from him, but she held out her hands in appeal.

"Hush, Brilliana!"

The grave, sweet voice sounded on her ears as the knell of hope. But she faced him again with a useless, questioning glance.

"Why talk of what cannot be?" Evander asked, sadly.

Brilliana denied him feverishly.

"What can be—what must be!" she cried. "The King has promised."

"I am a soldier of the Parliament," Evander asserted. "I cannot abandon my cause."

Brilliana almost screamed at him in her anger and despair.

"You are a prisoner under sentence of death. If you die, what gain has the Parliament of you, and I must live a widowed woman." She was close to him now and very suddenly she flung

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her arms about him, clasping him to her, her eager face close to his.

"Promise," she panted; "promise, dear love, promise. Your Parliament loses nothing, you gain your life, my love. Promise, promise!"

Evander's flesh fought with his spirit, but his face was calm and the arms that yearned to enfold his lover lay by his side. He turned his face away lest he should kiss her on the mouth, and, kissing, surrender his soul.

"I cannot," he said, as if from a great silence. He would not see the passionate, beautiful face; he sought to fix his mind upon the faces of those whose faithful soldier he was sworn. The girl unloosed her arms and swayed away from him, wild anger in her eyes.

"Do you call this true love," she sneered, "that is so scrupulous?"

"The truest love in the world," Evander answered, looking full at her. He could look at her now; he had no fear to fall. He was losing a joy beyond all thought, but at least he would die with a white soul.

"Do you think it is nothing to me to die thus losing you? But you have served soldier; you have a soldier's spirit; you would not have me do other than I am doing. You do not understand my cause, to think it should be easy to

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persuade me from it. But if I were of the King's party and in such peril so tempted, would you wish me to abandon my royal master to win life or love?"

Brilliana's cheeks flamed a furious scarlet; then the fierce blood ebbed and left her face very pale, but her eyes were shining very bright. She steadied herself against the table and tried to speak with a steady voice.

"You are in the right. You could not do other than you are doing. But it is very hard to bear."

She reeled a little, and he, thinking her about to faint, made to support her, but she stiffened again, and he stood where he was. She bent forward, speaking scarcely above a whisper.

"There is a way of escape from this chamber, a secret passage. You can get from it to the park, and so into the open country and safety. You are my prisoner. I release you from your parole. Fly, while there is time."

The loyal lovers were so absorbed in their honorable contest that they did not heed how the door of the King's apartment opened, first a little inch, then, slowly, wider and wider, allowing Charles Stuart to see and hear. A curious smile reigned over the delicate face as Brilli-

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ana made her proposal, and lingered in whimsical doubt for the response.

The response came quickly. Again Evander was saying Brilliana nay.

"I cannot that, neither, dear woman, for to do this would be to make you disloyal to your King."

"Oh, you split straws!" she cried, wildly. "A plague upon your preciousness which drives you to deny and die rather than admit my wisdom! You are no prisoner to the King. You are my prisoner. I took you, I hold you, and as my prisoner I command you to follow me, that I may convey you to some place of surety more pleasing to my mind than this mansion."

From behind the door ajar there came a clap of hearty laughter which made harassed maid and man jump more than if their discussion had been interrupted by volleying musketry. The door was wide open now, and the King was in the room, his face irradiated with honest mirth.

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XXIX

THE KING MAKES A FRIEND

"Oh, good sir," he gasped, dabbing with his kerchief the merry tears from his smiling eyes, "you had better do as this lady urges, for, by St. George! she employs the most irresistible logic."

Evander and Brilliana, blown apart, as it were, by the breath of the King's merriment, regarded the monarch with very different feelings. Though he stood upon the edge of peril's precipice, at the threshold of death's temple, Evander could not scrutinize without vivid and conflicting emotions the face of the man because of whom the solid realm of England seemed to be dissolving into anarchy. This was the King of ship-money, the heart's-brother of Buckingham, the betrayer of Strafford, the doer to death of Eliot, the would-be baffler of free speech, the baffled hunter after the five members. To Brilliana he was simply the King, not even the whole hero and half-martyr King for whom she had held Loyalty House so

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sturdily, but simply the only man living graced with power to save the man she loved. She turned to him at once with a petulant expression of impatience.

"Your Majesty," she sighed, "I wish you would speak to this proud gentleman. I cannot make him listen to reason."

The almost infantile simplicity of her address stirring the King to renewed merriment, served her cause better, in its very inappropriateness to the situation, than the most impassioned or the most calculated appeals to pity or to justice. The audacity with which the Loyalty lady coolly enlisted the King as her advocate against the King's interests seemed to the sovereign so exquisite, so grotesque, as to merit calling irresistible.

"Truly," he said to her, smiling that sweet Stuart smile which made all who ever shone in it adore him, "the man must be named Felicissimus who is loved by such a lady."

Then he turned his gaze upon Evander, and the smile grew graver, the eyes more imperious.

"So, sir," he said, "you are so certain sure of the righteousness of your side in this quarrel that you cannot, for your life's sake, for your love's sake, consent to stand neuter and look on, Captain Infallibility?"

Evander faced the slightly frowning interro-

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gation bravely. He saluted soldierly, conscious of the subtle Stuart charm, understanding it would conquer men and women, glad to find himself unconquered.

"Your Majesty," he said, "let me answer you as I answered this dear lady. If one of those gentlemen, those Cavaliers who rallied to your flag at Nottingham and drew their swords for you at Edgehill, were made prisoner of the Parliament, and accepted his life on the condition that he stood aside and left you to fight without his aid, would you count him a loyal subject, would you call him a faithful friend, could you admit that he was an honest soldier?"

Charles looked at Evander curiously. There were some of his friends, he thought, who might not stand the trial too well. He brushed the thought aside, for he knew that most of the Cavaliers would act as gallantly as the young Puritan before him, and he could not but applaud, even while he wondered at so stiff a constancy in one whom he regarded as a rebel.

"Well, well," he said, "if this incomparable lady could not persuade you, how could a poor King hope to succeed? We must not break this lady's heart, sir, between us, for 'tis something of a rare jewel, and so you shall go back to your own people, and when I win the day I shall re-

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member to be clement to you. Try and come out of the scuffle alive, for the sake of your sweetheart."

The King was so winning in his grace, in his dignity, in his tenderness, that Evander felt his heart in his mouth and he tried not to falter in his words.

"I humbly thank your Majesty."

As for Brilliana, she fell on her knees with tears in her eyes, but the King would not have her kneel. In his courtliest manner he lifted her, raised her right hand to his lips and kissed it, and then signifying to her with a gesture to go to Evander, he seated himself at the table and wrote rapidly for some seconds, while the two lovers stood side by side, silent in hope and joy.

When the King had finished writing he shook the powder over the paper and let it slide back into the standish, drying the ink as it slid. Then he turned and held the paper to Evander, who advanced and took it kneeling.

"This safe-conduct," said Charles, "will insure you from ill treatment or delay at the hands of any loyal subjects, in arms or otherwise." He leaned forward and struck upon the bell. To the soldier on guard who entered he gave order that he wished to see Sir Rufus Quaryll immediately. When the soldier had left, he turned in

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his chair a little, so as to survey Evander and Brilliana standing before him in silence, and there was a light of mockery in his eyes.

"Young people," he said, affecting mirthfully an exhortatory manner, "you have played the first act of your love-play. How it is to go with you hereafter it is for all to hope, albeit for none to guess with discretion. But in a little while this land distracted will be calm again, and it may well be, Mr. Cloud, that I shall be glad to see you at Whitehall."

The King's manner was mild, the King's voice benign; he was really very well pleased with himself for his clemency, and very well pleased with the man and woman for affording him an opportunity of justifying his character of benevolent autocrat. He would have said more, but at this moment the door opened and Sir Rufus entered the room, looking as fierce and angry as he dared to look in the presence of his royal master. He knew well enough that Brilliana's interview with the King was likely to mean mischief to his schemes, and his rage and hate tore at his life-strings like wild beasts.

An impish malice lurked on Charles's lips. This discomfiture of the truculent Rufus supplied for him the comic element of his entertainment, and came just in the nick of time to

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prevent its heroics and its sentimentalities from palling.

"Sir Rufus," said the King, gravely, "we ride at once to Oxford, our loyal, loving Oxford. Take order for this on the instant. The Lady Brilliana resumes her command of Loyalty House, with our royal thanks for her man's spirit and our royal sympathy for her woman's heart. As for the stranger within our gates, we have of our clemency given him full leave to go hence in all freedom, not without some private supplications that Heaven may be pleased to lift a misguided gentleman into a better way of life."

Sir Rufus opened his lips as if to speak, and then closed them again without speaking. He knew well enough how stubborn the King could be on occasion, and that there was no hope for him to win his game with the King's help. He saluted the King and left the presence with fury in his heart.

The King turned to Evander.

"Go, sir," he commanded, "and make ready for your departure, which should follow promptly upon mine, for I do not think the atmosphere of Oxford will be sweet breathing for gentlemen of your inclining from this out. I give you half an hour from my riding to say your adieus to your sweet saint here. Farewell."

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Evander fell on one knee.

"Your Majesty," he pleaded, "permit me to kiss your hand." The King smiled whimsically, yet a thought wistfully.

"You are a gentle rebel," he said, and held out his fine, white hand for Evander's salutation. Then the young soldier rose, and with one look of love to Brilliana, left the room. Charles stood with his grave eyes fixed on his hostess, smiling.

"What a thing is civil war!" he sighed. "How it rips through the pretty web of workaday life, dividing sire from son, sundering brother from brother, parting lover from lass! But I was forced to it—I was forced to it."

"It will end soon, sire," Brilliana suggested, tears in her eyes at the sadness in his. The King seemed to catch at her speech.

"Ay," he agreed, more cheerily. "That's it, that's true. 'Tis but a walk to loyal Oxford, 'tis but a march on disloyal London, and all's done."

"London will prove loyal when your Majesty enters in triumph," Brilliana cried. A bright look came over the King's worn face. As in a dream he saw himself, the rose of that triumphant entry, flowers at his feet, flags in the air, loyalty abroad in its bravest, huzzaing its loud-

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est, and all grim, sour-hearted fellows safe out of sight under lock and key. Exultantly he held out his hand for Brilliana to salute.

"Farewell, Lady of Loyalty."

"Nay," Brilliana protested, "I must bring your Majesty to the gate. If the fitting welcome were missing, you shall not lack the ceremonial 'God speed you.'"

"I thank you, madam," gravely answered Charles. Brilliana dipped him a reverence, and then, opening the door, conducted her royal guest out of the chamber. In the corridor they found Halfman waiting to kiss the King's hand. Charles felt for a moment for his purse, and then swiftly and regally changing his mind, he drew a ring from his finger.

"Wear this for me, friend," he requested, graciously, "in memory of old days."

Halfman rose from his knees and drew himself up as if on parade.

"God save the King!" he thundered, and with that loyal music in his ears the King followed Brilliana down the great staircase over which the carven angels kept watch and ward. Halfman, leaning over the rail-way, saw the pair pass through the hall, then he turned and entered the apartment that Charles had left, and stood there, rigid in meditation.

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XXX

RUFUS PROPOSES

RUFUS stepped stealthily out of the dusking garden into the lighted room, and moving noiselessly across the floor, laid his hand on Halfman's shoulder. Halfman did not look round.

"Well, Sir Rufus," he asked, as calmly as if the sudden touch had been some recognized, awaited signal.

"You are not to be taken by surprise, my good friend," Sir Rufus said. Halfman shrugged his shoulders.

"It would need more than the clap of a man's paw on my back to take me by surprise; and, besides, I saw you coming. There is a mirror near, good Sir Rufus, and even in yonder owl-light I could pick you out of the mist. Moreover, I thought you would come."

"Why did you think I would come?" Sir Rufus asked, with a frown.

"Just because I thought it," Halfman answered, indifferently. "And, you see, my thoughts were true thoughts."

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Sir Rufus came closer to him, speaking in his ear.

"I hope you hate all Roundheads," he said. "All damned rebels."

Halfman's only answer was to whistle very softly the first few bars of a roaring Cavalier ballad. The grasp on Halfman's shoulder tightened.

"There is one damned Roundhead here who vexes me," Sir Rufus said, fiercely.

"I think his name is called Cloud," said Halfman.

Sir Rufus swore a round oath.

"I wish he were dead," he said.

"If wishes were coaches," Halfman observed, sententiously, "beggars would ride."

"He would have been dead ere this if she had not wheedled the King out of his wits. His Majesty is in a forgiving disposition to-day, and forgets his friends at the prayer of a pretty face. I wish this rebel were dead, friend."

"He will die in time," Halfman commented, philosophically. Sir Rufus growled.

"You are as dull as mud. It would be money in your pocket, friend Halfman, ay, money running over your pocket-holes, if this rebel were to be your quarry."

Halfman shook his head, and a knowing smile twisted his mouth awry.

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"Nay, Sir Rufus, with your favor, you must do your own killing," he said.

"Why, so I will," Rufus answered, angrily. "I will call up the household, lay hands on the rascal, back him to the wall, and bang a fusillade into him."

Halfman laughed derisively.

"Call up the household!" he crowed. "Do you think they would come at your call? Do you think they would serve you against my lady? Why, they would fling you into the fish-pools if she bade them do so."

The face of Sir Rufus showed that through all his fury he still retained sufficient command of his reason to know that what Halfman said was more than true. Halfman went leisurely on:

"You cannot employ your own men on the business, neither, for they must march to Oxford with the King. In little it comes to this: if you want a thing done, do it yourself."

"You are in the right," Sir Rufus agreed, gloomily. "This fellow was doomed long since. It is no more than common justice to put him out of the way. But I ride with the King."

"You need not ride very far," Halfman suggested. "A little way on the road you can slip aside unseen and get back here by a bridle-path. Watch at the western gate of the park.

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His horse will be waiting for him there to carry him to Cambridge. After his tender leave-taking he will come to his exit a clear mark on the white garden-path for a steady hand holding a pistol. So you can whistle 'Good-night, cuckoo,' as you haste to o'ertake the King."

"'Tis an ingenious scheme," Sir Rufus mused. Halfman laughed grimly.

"Oh, I am a pattern of strategy; this is but a simple ambuscado, a tame trap. You are a sure shot, I know; you cannot miss your bird. You need waste no time in making sure that he is stark. I shall be at hand to make sure, and will soon stick him in a ditch to wait for judgment."

Sir Rufus clapped Halfman on the shoulder.

"Your wit has a most pleasant invention," he approved. "She will soon forget this whining wry-face."

Halfman disengaged himself from the pressure of his companion's hand.

"It is so to be hoped," he said, drearily; "it is so to be believed. Woman's love-memory is a kind of quicksand that can swallow a score or so of gallant gentlemen and show no trace of their passage."

"A curse on your poppycoddle," Sir Rufus

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grumbled. "I must be stirring. I should like him to know that I killed him."

"If I find any breath in him I will tell him," Halfman affirmed. "Your honor over-refines your pleasant purpose. The pith is that he be killed. Remember the western gate."

In another moment Halfman was alone, listening to the sound of spurred heels on the stairway, as Sir Rufus hastened to join the King.

"Love of woman leads us to strange issues," he said to himself, with a wintry smile. "Cavalier, Puritan, and poor Jack here, we all love the same lady, and here be two of us clapping palms together to kill the third."

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XXXI

HALFMAN DISPOSES

BRILLIANA came in from the garden. Halfman heard her step and turned. She was pale with many emotions; he never had seen her more beautiful.

"The King has gone, friend," she said; "God bless him for his clemency."

"My heart does not sing because a Puritan lives," Halfman answered, sourly. He stared into the fire again and saw burning towns between the dogs. Brilliana paused for a moment and then came a little closer to him.

"We have ever been friends," she said, softly. There was a note of timidity in her voice, new to Halfman, and he turned in surprise.

"Indeed," he said, roundly.

"We have been fellow-soldiers," Brilliana went on, still with that curious hesitancy that sat so strangely upon her. "We have shared a siege. I have a secret to tell you."

Halfman felt a sudden uncanny warning of danger. "A secret," he repeated, staring at her.

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Brilliana was outblushing all things red—peony, poppy, flamingo, anything.

"You have always loved me, Hobbin?" she asked, half timorously.

"I have always loved you," he answered, slowly, with a rigid face.

"Then you will be glad of what I have to tell," she said. "There will be no change here. For I love this gentleman even as this gentleman loves me, and we are to wed when this meddling war is ended."

"You love him?" Halfman echoed, dully. "You wed an enemy to the King?"

Brilliana sighed.

"Love is the greatest power in all the world," she said; "greater than kings, greater than emperors, greater than popes. But I will wed no enemy to the King. If these wars were to endure forever, then forever my dear friend and I would remain unwed and bear our single souls to heaven."

Her voice was low and dreary; suddenly it brightened.

"But these wars will not endure forever. The King will be in London in a few days; the Parliament will be at his feet; my friend will be no more a rebel, for all rebellion will have ceased to be."

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"How if your friend be killed before the King reaches London?" Halfman asked her, hoarsely. "The wheels of war do not turn from the path of a lover."

"If he be killed," she said, simply, "I do not think I shall long outlive him. My heart does not veer like a vane for every breath of praise or passion. First and last, I have found my mate in the world; first and last, I will be loyal while I live. But if he die, I hope God will deal gently with me, nor suffer me to grow gray in sorrow."

She turned away from Halfman that he might not see the tears in her eyes, and so turning did not see the tears that stood in his. She moved towards the harpsichord and dropped into the chair that served it. Her fingers fluttered over the keys and a tinkling music answered them and underlined the words she sang:

"You ride to fight, my dearest friend,
I bide at home and sigh;
God only knows what God may send,
To test us, by-and-by.
If 'tis decreed that you must die,
So comes my world to end;
And I will seek beyond the sky
The features of my friend.
Come back from fight, my dearest friend,
The idol of my eye,

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That hand in hand ourselves may bend
Before God's altar high.
If death consent to pass you by,
How sweetly shall we wend
To the last home where we shall lie
Together, friend and friend."

As Brilliana sat at the harpsichord playing the brave Cavalier ballad, Halfman, watching her, found his eyes dim with most unfamiliar water. Fierce memories of his life seemed to come before him sharply, vivid succeeding pictures, rich in evil. In a flash he tramped across forests, sack and battle and rapine new painted themselves upon his brain; deeds long dead and forgotten suddenly became instant agonies. He seemed like a prisoner before an invisible judge, and his startled spirit sought wildly and vainly for some good deed it might offer in plea for pity. If only he had spared that girl, that child unripe for love, who never dreamed of brutal hands. He seemed to see her in the room where he ran her down, her staring eyes; he seemed to hear her screams; he remembered how hot his blood was then, though now it ran like ice at the memory. If only he had not helped to torture the old Jew in San Juan; if only he could blot out his share in all those acts of lust and blood. And through all

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his horrid thoughts came the sweet voice of Brilliana singing the sweet, brave words, and he saw her curls sway as she sang, and he thought of her love for her kinsman which she had told him so simply, and he thought of his own mad love for her, which she would never know, which no one would ever understand. And then he thought of that grim sentry at the western gate whose hate was black, whose aim was fatal.

A fantastic purpose came into the man's thought. His mind was ever like a stage with the lights lighted and the curtains drawn, upon whose boards himself played a thousand parts and played them to the top. Here was the part he had never played, the noblest, the most heroic, chiefly perhaps in this, that it was also the loneliest. The purpose had hardly pricked before he seized it, hugged it to his breast, made it incorporate with his being. Mingled with his tender pity for Brilliana there was now a splendid pity for himself, the noblest Roman of them all. But the purpose must not cool. His thoughts were all a-jumble. One of them seemed to assert to his feverish fancy that this way meant atonement; the quenching of his torch some measure of compensation for the candles he had puffed out.

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Unseen he stretched his hands as if in benediction towards Brilliana, and then went noiselessly out of the room. On the stairs he met Evander descending to say farewell to his hostess, his hat in his hand and his cloak over his arm. Halfman stopped him. "She waits you in the garden-room," he said; "I will hold your cloak and hat for you here while you make your adieus. A lover should not be cumbered." Evander thanked him, surrendered cloak and hat, and entered the garden-room. He did not hear what Halfman said, though Halfman spoke it aloud, with all the lovers of all time for audience: "There goes the blessedest man in all the world." Then, with Evander's cloak about him and Evander's hat upon his head, Halfman went out into the garden.

At the sound of Evander's step Brilliana turned and rose to greet him.

"My dear!" she cried, her eyes luminous, her breast heaving.

"My riding-time has come," he said, sadly. He stood apart, but she came near to him and put her hands on his shoulders.

"You found me in tears, but you must think of me as smiling — smiling for joy in my lover, smiling at the thought of his return."

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He caught her in his arms, clasped her close to him, and kissed her lips. It seemed to him as if that moment consecrated him forever. She was simply glad that the man she loved had kissed her.

"These are evil days," he said. "Who knows when we shall meet again."

"At least we have met," she answered. "I shall thank God for that, morning and night. Nothing can change that, if we do not meet for months, for years, if we never meet again."

"These wars must end soon," Evander said, confidently. Brilliana caught at his hands.

"You will never hurt the King," she cried. "Promise me that. You will never hurt the King."

"I will never hurt the King," Evander promised. "And now, dear love—"

He could not say farewell.

There was a moment's silence as they stood facing each other, holding hands, the woman trying to smile. The silence was suddenly, brutally broken by the loud, clear report of a shot. Brilliana stiffened with the start.

"What was that?"

"It seemed a pistol-shot in the garden," Evander answered.

"Who should fire now?"

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"I will go see," Evander said, turning towards the open space. Brilliana restrained him.

"Oh no, dear love, my heart misgives; there may be danger."

Evander gently released himself.

"And when are you or I afraid of danger?"

Brilliana accepted this.

"Then I go with you."

Instantly Evander paused.

"No, no," he said.

Brilliana repeated his words.

"Why, when are you or I afraid of danger?"

There was a noise of running feet in the garden, and then Thoroughgood sped across the moat and into the room.

"Captain Halfman has been shot," he gasped.

"Oh, by whom?" Brilliana wailed, her eyes wide with horror.

"Is he killed?" Evander asked.

Thoroughgood answered both in a breath.

"Badly wounded. They bring him here."

As he spoke, Garlinge and Clupp entered from the garden, bearing Halfman between them, wrapped in Evander's mantle.

The man of gallant carriage, of swaggering alacrity, seemed to lie horribly limp in the men's arms. Evander hurriedly made a couch of chairs and bade them lay their burden on it,

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that he might examine the wound. Brilliana bent over him.

"Oh, my dear friend," she sobbed.

The sound of her voice seemed to awaken Halfman. He opened his eyes.

"Lift me up," he said, feebly, to his supporters. He looked at Brilliana. "Lady, you have been deceived. Sir Randolph escaped from his enemies. A snare was set for Captain Cloud—" he paused.

"By whom?" cried Brilliana, the woman eager for her lover.

Something like a smile came to Halfman's face.

"That I may not say. I was privy to the plot. But I walked into the trap myself. I fear, sir, you will find a hole in your mantle."

"You wore my cloak?" Evander asked, in wonder. "You died for me?"

"Ah, why did you not warn?" Brilliana cried.

Halfman moved his head feebly.

"I did not want to live."

"But you shall live," Brilliana insisted, prayed.

Halfman laughed very faintly.

"I do not think so. I am an old soldier, and —ah!"

He gave a great gasp. Then suddenly lifted

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himself a little and saluted Brilliana as if on parade.

"Here, my sweet warrior," he said, clearly. He looked fixedly at Brilliana and declaimed, "I did hear you speak, far above singing." Then his chin dropped; his head fell back on the supporting arms. Evander touched him, turned to Brilliana.

"Alas! he's sped."

The only sound in the silent room was the weeping of Brilliana in Evander's arms.

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EPILOGUE

MASTER MARFLEET in his "Diurnal" hides in his prolixities some particulars interesting to us. Thus we learn incidentally from some reflections on the wickedness of the great, that while the King reigned in Oxford—to Master Marfleet he is always the "Man of Blood" when he is not Nebuchadnezzar—Lady Brilliana Harby was in such favor at the court and with the Queen as to obtain patents of knighthood for two neighbors of hers, one Paul Hungerford and one Peter Rainham. We further learn that Brilliana accompanied the Queen—in whom Mr. Marfleet traces a remarkable likeness to Jezebel — to France in 1644, after which "flight of kites, crows, and other carrion fowl"—the words are Mr. Marfleet's—the estate of Harby came, through the good offices of General Cromwell, into the hands of Colonel Evander Cloud, much to Mr. Marfleet's satisfaction, a satisfaction which the school-master did not live long enough to lose.

Of Colonel Cloud's honorable military career

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we find a brief but eminently satisfactory account in Corporal Blow-the-Trumpet-against-Jericho Pring's pamphlet — now more than scarce—entitled "The Roll-Call of the Regiments of Zion."

From a letter of Colonel Cloud's, preserved in the Perrington Papers (*Historical Manuscripts Commission*, vol. XCIX., B), we learn that after Naseby the writer found among the dying the person of Sir Rufus Quaryll.

"As God may forgive me," he writes, "I had sought for this man in encounter after encounter, with black thoughts of vengeance in my bosom. But as he lay there I felt constrained by divine impulse to forgive him, though he made me no answer but to curse horribly at me and at the fool who took my place; and so passed away, as I fear, very impenitent."

After the surrender of the King by the Scots, and the end, as it seemed, of the civil war, Colonel Cloud, with the permission of his great chief, retired from active affairs and made his way to France, to Paris, where, in the early spring of 1647, he was married to Lady Brilliana Harby. Some of the French writers of the time make rather merry over this romantic union and the five years fidelity of squire and dame—Strephon and Chloe, as they are pleased

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to call them. But the laugh is rather on the wrong side of the face, for it is well known that there was bitter disappointment in the hearts and on the lips of many French gallants who had tried their best to win the beautiful English girl, and greatly resented her reservation for this solemn gentleman. One or two efforts, however, to make this resentment plain to the English soldier resulting uncomfortably, after a brisk morning's work, in the temporary disablement of one aggressor and the repeated disarming of another, in the end the "homme à Cromwell" was left to wed in peace. Oddly enough, his best man was his old acquaintance Sir Blaise Mickleton, who, having realized his property in good time, had settled in Paris since 1644 and had almost forgotten his native tongue, which he spoke, when he did speak, with a little broken French accent, very pretty to hear. He had once tried to renew his pretensions to the hand of Brilliana, and had been so startlingly rebuffed that he never repeated the effort and was content to remain her very good friend. Evander was in England once or twice during the years 1647 and 1648, but after the death of the King, against which he vainly protested, with his famous friend he settled down in France, in the Loire country, for many happy years.

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EPILOGUE

After the Restoration, Harby Hall passed by mutual arrangement into the hands of Sir Randolph Harby, who had cheerfully ruined himself in the service of his King. Through him the name still persists in Maryland, in America. Harby itself was destroyed by fire early in the eighteenth century. It was not rebuilt; the moat was filled up, and no trace of Loyalty House remains to-day. In Harby church-yard there is an ancient stone, set there by Brilliana's order. It bears the name of Halfman, the date of his death, and after that date the words, "I did hear you speak, far above singing."

THE END

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